

George W.M. Reynolds: Editorials from
Reynolds's Weekly Newspaper

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All articles transcribed by Stephen Basdeo and Jessica
Elizabeth Thomas.

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Note on the Text

The following articles were all transcribed by Stephen Basdeo and Jessica Elizabeth Thomas. The content of this volume consists of editorials that were *signed* by Reynolds.

The original citations are all given at the beginning of each article.

Due to the binding of the newspapers, in several instances we were not able to decipher some words. Where readers see (?) that means that we have been completely unable to read a word. Where readers see a word in italics with a superscript next to it (e.g. *voluptuary*¹), this is an interpolation on our part, with some of the word being decipherable.

Every effort has been made to proof-read this text. We apologise in advance if there are any mistakes in our transcription. This has been a voluntary “labour of love” and we lack access to professional proof reading services that would be available to use if this book was published by an academic press.

Stephen Basdeo and Jessica E. Thomas
March 2021.

The Prospects of the Democratic Cause

Original citation: George W.M. Reynolds, 'The Prospects of the Democratic Cause', *Reynolds's Weekly Newspaper* May 5, 1850, p. 1.

Another glorious victory is gained by the cause of True Freedom: Eugene Sue, the Red Republican and Socialist Candidate, has triumphed by an immense majority of votes over the favourite of the Reactionaries. The writer of tales which everybody has read, has beaten the hero of a romance for which no one could vouch. In spite of the sickening, nauseating, mendacious accounts of Leclerc's bravery at the barricades,—in spite of the maudlin sympathy which it was the endeavour to create on behalf of the shop-keeper by the representation of his stoic patriotism in fetching out one son to avenge another's death,—in spite of all the diabolical attempts made by the ruffian Prefect of Politics to put down the public meetings of the veritable Democrats,—in spite of all these influences, I say, truth has prevailed and Eugene Sue is triumphant. Now what will the *Times* newspaper say? How will it account for its prophecies of the inevitable success of monsieur Leclerc? Never was there a public print so cursed by a misinformed, pig-headed, and purblind Paris correspondent as this unfortunate *Times* which dares to call itself the "leading journal of Europe!" Its predicament was as ludicrously miserable on the occasion of the last elections as it is in the present instance. Both then and now its leaders were assured—most positively assured—that the Red Republicans and Socialists had not a chance. What do the aristocracy and middle-classes of England think of their favourite journal *now*?

will they still look upon its opinions as gospel? Will they still regard its prescience as infallible? Poor wretched drivelling *Times*—it is not even so truthful, so sapient, or so far seeing as the “Grandmama” *Herald*!

Let the Democrats of England rejoice at the victory which their cause has obtained in France. *Again* is the grand truth made patent to all the world, that two-thirds of the French nation, judged by any test that may be put, are Red Republican and Socialist. Who, then, shall dare to say that millions and millions of the most intelligent, enlightened, and logical people on the face of God’s Earth, are all in error and that they have adopted opinions which will prove subversive of society? A year and a half ago the *Times* ridiculed the French by the averment that “they had a Republic without a single partizan of republicanism.” Wondrous indeed then must be the truthfulness of a Red Republican and social doctrines when they can make millions of proselytes in so short a space! And now observe, that the middle classes in France must be deeply imbued with those principles, in order to enable them *again and again* to achieve so signal a Triumph. And yet in England for leaders of the middle classes will not even grant universal suffrage to the nation!

I cannot for the moment take leave of the *Times* without reminding my readers that after the last elections, which resulted in the triumph of the glorious Patriots, Carnot, Vidal, and De Flotte, the Paris correspondent of the English journal just mentioned wrote, day after day, to insist that the French shop-keepers bitterly repented of the votes they had given and had merely purposed to give the government a lesson. Now, either the *Times* must have made the scandalous misrepresentations wilfully, or it must have been so badly

informed as to destroy forever its authority as an organ of intelligence. For, so far from the Parisian middle-classed being sorry for their recent conduct, they have deliberately, intentionally, and nobly enacted the same admirable part over again. In a word, the great majority of the French people are Red Republican and Socialist; and as France is the nation which moves the world, the progress of true democracy throughout Europe cannot be for a moment doubtful.

What dismay—what terror—what dread alarms, has the result of the Paris election created amongst the tyrants and the oppressors of the people in all countries which the glorious intelligence has yet reached!—and what rage, despair, and apprehension must now rack the soul of Louis Napoleon Bonaparte! The Army is against him—the Middle Classes are against him—the millions are against him: and the wretched knot of drivellers, traitors, and intriguers who constitute “The Party of order,” are *alone* for him.

There never was a period in the annals of the civilised world more solemnly or sublimely interesting than the present one. It is fraught with materials for the study of the philosopher—with striking events for the narrative of the historian—with wondrous phases for the contemplation of the social reformer—and with the gravest subjects for the pen of the journalist and the oratory of the politician. And more than all these, it is pregnant with terror for the oppressor and with hope for the oppressed. Everywhere have worn out institutions been shaken, and the old systems of society subjected to a scrutiny and an exposure which they cannot long survive. Their iniquity, their corruption, and their injustice have been rendered so apparent, that the next revolutionary convulsion on the Continent will be the signal for their utter annihilation. In some

countries the result will be brought about by violence: in others by moral means. Where the possessors of power and the privileged orders persist in clinging to the very last unto those systems which benefit the few to the prejudice of the many, torrents of blood will inevitably flow: but where the rulers and the aristocratic exclusives yield in time, freedom may be gained without the loss of a single life.

It is easy to distinguish and point out the countries that will have to pass through a fiery ordeal, and those which will have to pass through peaceful transitions from a state of corruption and danger to a condition of health and security. In England, the grandest reforms may be accomplished by moral means because the very nature of our institutions is such that those which are objectionable are either perishing by their own intrinsic rottenness, or are ready to fall by their own weight. It only requires that continual pressure of Truth which the growing intelligence of the millions has brought to bear upon such institutions, to hasten their decay and accelerate their fall. For instance, the bloated Church establishment, so flagrantly at variance with the true Spirit of Christianity, cannot possibly maintain itself much longer. The dissenters and nonconformists of all sects, grades, and opinions, are the really intellectual and the most enlightened religionists in the country; and they constitute an overwhelming majority in comparison with the votaries and adherence of that Church Establishment. Then again, the Hereditary Aristocracy is perishing by a suicidal process; its avowed antagonism to all real progress—its hatred of the masses generally—its arrogance, greed, ignorance, selfishness, and all the other bad patterns which inspire its exclusive mind, are so many weapons which it is in reality turning against itself. Next come the great Landowners—the

monopolists of that garden which God Almighty gave the benefit of all, and not for the advantage of a favoured few: *their* tremendous privileges received a heavy blow by the abolition of the Corn-Laws—and the destruction of the far more infamous feudalisms of primogeniture, mortmain, and entail, would speedily break up there monopoly altogether. The ridiculous pomp, ostentation, and pageantry connected with the court have even become obnoxious to middle-class leaders; and such men as Hulme, Bright, Cobden, Walmsley, and others of the same school, have not hesitated to denounce that extravagant mummerly in the strongest terms. The navy and the army,—the Crown Lands and the Colonies,—the Government Offices and the Diplomatic Departments,—all these have received such a showing-up that to maintain them upon their present basis and in their existing condition for any length of time, is a hope in which none but the most drivelling old Tory can possibly indulge. Then as for Parliamentary Reform and the remodelling of the whole representative system,—these are certainties within the range of prophecy,—not only because the people are resolute on these points, but also because there is such a complete break-up of all the old political parties in the House of Commons that no strong ministry can now be formed on the present system. In fact, with the Whigs continuing to hold power upon the most precarious tenure,—with Peel’s party utterly unable to take their place,—with the Protectionists notoriously incompetent to retain office for three months, even if their opponents should allow them to slip into it,—the state of parties is such that confusion and anarchy must follow unless some influential leader suddenly and promptly takes up the cry of “Reform.” England, then, is in that position which must shortly *compel* the adoption of a progressive policy, however

unwillingly it may be taken up by those time-servers who are likely to yield through selfish expediency rather than from conscientious motives. It requires but a vigorous agitation on the part of the industrious classes throughout the country to evoke that spirit of pliancy: let the seed be sown now—and the harvest will be reaped abundantly in a very short time.

Such is the position of England—a position which guarantees a bloodless triumph of for the true votaries of Democracy. In the United States of America a happy and prosperous people will pass by rapid transitions, easily and without convulsive shocks, from the enjoyment of those glorious political rights which they now possess, to be attainment of those social blessings which constitute the true meaning of liberty, fraternity, and equality. In Sweden and Norway there is likewise every prospect of the masses obtaining their rights and privileges without insurrectionary means:—and the same may be said of Switzerland. But now the picture becomes reversed;—and in pointing to France, the German States, Prussia, Austria, Italy, Spain, Portugal, and glorious Hungary, it becomes lamentably evident that the atrocious tyranny of despots or the oppression of worn-out institutions can only be taken off by violence.

In France the existing government stands upon a mine which the most trivial accident may cause to explode at any moment. Louis Napoleon Bonaparte has become not only obnoxious—but what is infinitely worse for his prospects, he has grown contemptible. The French might endure a real lion for a season: but it is against all experience to believe that they can long tolerate the ass in the lion's skin. Not even the great name of Bonaparte can serve as a cloak, much less an apology, for the most impudent charlatanism. The hand has gone forth—

the writing is upon the wall—and the fingers of Red Republicanism have traced the *Upharsin* of the presidential career of special-constable Louis Napoleon. He is falling—he will fall: and on the ruins of his insane hopes and ambitious prospects will be established the veritable Social and Democratic Republic.

In Spain and Portugal the aspect of affairs is by no means encouraging to the “party of order.” The queens are both countries have done all that they possibly could to render monarchical institutions odious, scandalous, and infamous in the eyes of their subjects. I know not how true it may be, but the *Morning Post* has openly and fearlessly accused the Portuguese Queen of adultery with the Count de Thomar, her favourite minister;—and a reference to the letter of my Spanish correspondent in another column, will furnish an idea of the estimation in which the Spaniards must now hold the young woman who reigned over them. But, whether these Queens be calumniated or guilty, matters little to be argument. It is enough for the true friends of Democracy to know that Isabella of Spain and Maria of Portugal are regarded with very unloving eyes by the subjects. Whatever their private characters may really be, it is certainly enough that the tyranny which they either practice or countenance has goaded their people to the very verge of desperation;—and the instant but the thrilling cry of “Paris is again in Revolution!” shall echo across the Pyrenees, the Democrats of Spain and Portugal will not look idly or quietly on.

And who does not know—who does not feel convinced beyond all possibility of doubt, that the moment the brave Republicans of Paris shall rise again, the cowardly old Pope will decamp from Rome, with a greater precipitation than ever,

to make room for the glorious Mazzini? The miserable, narrow-minded, bigoted ecclesiastic, who dares to call himself the Apostle of that Christ whose worshippers he instigated the Franco-Algerine marauders to butcher and massacre—who retains his States through pools of blood shed to minister to his ambition and his worldly mindedness,—and who has been piety to pronounce blessings where the widows and orphans of murdered or exiled patriots are invoking curses upon his head,—this old man who has so much to answer for will not retain his ill-recovered power a single week after the coming overthrow of Louis Napoleon Bonaparte. With the downfall of the Popedom, adieu to tyranny in Naples—farewell to Royalty in Sardinia. Italy will be emancipated; and from the Alps to the Gulf of Taranto, the paeans of an enfranchised people shall gladden the hearts of Garibaldi the Brave and Mazzini the Incorruptible.

Then, too, in that good time which is fast approaching, the banner of the Magyar shall again be fanned by the breath of Liberty. A day of terrible retribution will it be for the Austrian miscreants who hanged the Patriots, scourged the women, and massacred the innocent children of Hungary. But a glorious day will it be for European democracy, when the admirable Kossuth, whom the villainous scavengers of a hireling press have dared to calumniate, shall once more preside over the councils of the nation that he loves so well. Then, despite the execrable perfidy of Georgey—despite the sanguinary policy of the Austrian Kaiser,—despite the sword of the bloodstained fiend Haynau—and despite also of the English *Times*, Kossuth shall become the regenerator and avenger of his country.

Austria, deprived of Hungary and the Italian provinces, will be reduced to a fifth-rate power—its limits circumscribed to

those of the medieval Duchy ere its rulers placed the crown of the Caesars on their brow. But the brave Viennese will not tolerate any imperial, nor royal, nor ducal authority: they will remember the atrocities of Windischgratz and the cruelties of Ban Jellachich—and they will host the banner of democracy on the summit of Saint Stephen's.

But when all these grand events are occurring in the countries already named, Prussia and the German states will not remain tranquil. The citizens of Berlin have not forgotten the cannonading with which their king, who rules “by the grace of God,” treated them in the month of March, 1848: neither have they lost sight of his numerous oaths glibly pronounced and as readily broken—his impudence octroying them a constitution, instead of allowing the national representatives to form one—his treachery towards the Frankfort Parliament, and his miserable trickery and establishing the Erfurt farce,—nothing about this will the Prussians forget when the proper time arrives for them to proclaim how deeply the remembrance of their wrongs is seared upon their hearts. As for the petty kings and trumpery dukes of the smaller states, they only retain their power at this moment through the protection of Prussia; and when the cause of democracy triumphs at Berlin, it will spread like wild-fire throughout the Germanic Confederation.

All these results are inevitable. Nor are they far distant. The experience of 1848 and teachings of the *seventeen revolutions* which occurred in Europe at that epoch, warrant all predictions which I have hastily sketched. Prior to the glorious days of February in the above-mentioned year, had any man written or spoken prophetically of an Emperor of Austria running away from his capita—of a King of Prussia remaining a prisoner, with paralysed energies, in his Palace—of a King of Naples

granting a Constitution—of a Baden army laying down its muskets to a man—of a Tuscan Grand Duke flying from presence of Democracy—or of a Pope bolting in the most ignominious and cowardly manner possible, while a modern Rienzi arose in his place,—had all these things been predicted even a week before they began to happen, the prophet would have been laughed at as a madman. But they did all happen, nevertheless. Aye—and they shall happen again too, within a very short time. But the results may not prove quite so satisfactory to “the party of order” on a future occasion as they did on the last. For inasmuch as most of the fugitive monarchs have now returned to their seats of tyranny, when they run off or are driven away the next time, *they shall never come back!* The democrats of the Continent have been duped once: they will be deceived no more.

But while waiting to become the Spectators of those glorious deeds that are soon to be enacted on the theatre of Europe, let the industrious classes of England remember that if their democratic brethren *abroad* are compelled to bide their time, they may nevertheless be agitating at *home*. Because the former struggle will be one of violence, for which a favourable opportunity must be awaited: whereas the movement here is a peaceful, a legal, and a constitutional one, relying only on moral means and bloodless agencies, and therefore fitted for all seasons and all occasions. Let meetings be held—let tracts be circulated—let cheap political periodicals be established—and let the working men assemble of an evening to read or hear read the journals that are favourable to their cause. Especially let them study foreign politics, which open so vast a field for their enlightenment and furnish so many glorious champions worthy of their admiration. Let them teach their children to mingle in

their prayers the names of Kossuth, Mazzini, Ledru-Rollin, and Louis Blanc: let them rear their offspring in adoration of the nobles of nature, instead of teaching them to cringe and bow to the aristocracy created by title and by privilege. In conclusion let them remember that MAN is the highest distinction which God recognised when He made all living things—and that there is no real or estimable aristocracy save that of Mind and of Virtue.

Our Boasted Freedom

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Nothing can be more disgusting than to hear individuals most of English freedom. There is no real freedom in this country; and the persons who idolise a shadow, are able knaves or fools. Those who fatten upon the corrupt institutions of the country will doubtless laud them to the skies; and those who are too prejudiced or too ignorant to view them in their proper light, echo the praises which the selfish and interested bestow upon them. The Queen has been taught from her cradle to look up on the political system of England as the best in the whole world; and she is not likely to quarrel with institutions which have raised her to the rank of a demi-goddess. A lord blesses the hereditary peerage and the principal of primogeniture. The pensioner glories in a system which enables him to enjoy a handsome income for doing nothing, or because his ancestresses sold their charms to that detestable monarch Charles the Second. The fat parson denounces as an infidel or atheist everyone who dares to find fault with the Church Establishment. The officer in the navy or in the army does not say anything defective in those institutions, and is ready at a moment's warning to raise the cry of the country being in danger of foreign invasion should attempt be made at reducing the number of sailors or soldiers. The placeman and sinecurist talk loudly and incessantly of the perfection of the British Constitution, and go into raptures when extolling the "wisdom of our ancestors." The lawyer loves of the endless ramifications

of Chancery proceedings and the cumbrous machinery of our other Courts, because the produce of such an endless entanglement of forms and technicalities is a rich harvest of costs and fees. The government clerk, who would not be worth his twenty-five shillings a week in a mercantile counting-house, is naturally vociferous and dogmatic in his praises of a system which gives him several hundreds a year for lounging over a desk from ten till four. The unpaid Justice of the Peace is ever ready to invoke the aid of the military, read the Riot Act, or swear-in special constables, to support institutions which grant him the privilege of sending to the treadmill any poor devil who's snares a rabbit or shoots a pheasant upon his worship's estate. The coal-king and the manufacturer see nothing defective in a system which has provided so many laws to punish combinations and support the tyranny of the Capital. The great landowner views with horror any attempt to change the system which enables him to monopolize so large a portion of the soil to the prejudice of millions of his fellow creatures; and he wonders how anybody can wish to destroy the laws of primogeniture, mortmain, and entail. The great merchant, the first-class tradesman, the fund holder and the proprietors of railway scrip, all shrink from any innovations which may interfere with their inordinate accumulations of wealth, their vast increase of profits, and the scandalous monopolies; while the petty shopkeeper in the humble money-jobber are of opinion that things had better remain as they are. In fact, from the highest personage in the realm to a petite bourgeoisie, or smaller class of be shopocracy, all are found to be most ardent supporters of existing institutions and fervid admirers of what they are pleased to call "our blessed Constitution."

The proletarian class—the workers and produces—entertain very different opinions and speak in quite another style. Thus all who have got something by the present system are banded against all who get *nothing* by it. The industrial bee makes honey which the idle drone takes from him; and it is therefore no matter of wonder if the bee should be discontented while the drone dogmatically affirms that the system works admirably. For what is the real position of society? The agricultural labourer whose toil prepares the ground for the produce of the rich harvest, cannot obtain sufficient bread to eat: the man who makes warm and comfortable clothing, is himself in rags;—the journeyman brick player who builds the splendid mansions of the great, dwells in a wretched garret with his family; the producers of all the elegancies and luxuries of Life, are themselves unable to obtain an adequate supply of the necessaries. Is there not something wrong in a system which creates and maintains such monstrous inconsistencies—such glaring contrasts?

Where then is British Freedom? Does it consist in the right of the few to revel in luxury, while the millions starve? If so, the privileged orders are free enough, heaven knows!—but no condition of slavery can possibly be more hideous, more scandalous, or more inhuman than the serfdom of the workers and toilers in this country. Everything is in favour of the oligarchy and antagonistic to the interests of masses. The former have monopolised the most tremendous privileges and immunities which it has been possible to accumulate; and they have thrown up all kinds of defences to fortify their exceptional position against the battering-ram of Reform. Look at the myriad laws and statutes, etc. with which the poor may be oppressed, their demands for justice stifled, and their discontent

punished. When misery goads them to desperation and madness, does the government endeavour to remove the causes whereby those fierce passions are excited? No—the unfortunate beings are denounced as “seditious, wicked, and evil-disposed Persons,” and are thrust into dungeons. If they combine against their masters to force an adequate remuneration for a crushing toil, does the government wait to learn whether the masters have not all along been maintaining a tacit and continuous system of combination to keep down wages? No—the terrors of law are put into force and the “ringleaders” of what is termed the illegal combination on the part of the proletarians are torn from their families and either imprisoned or transported. If the white slaves of England assemble in great numbers to petition Parliament, does the government exhibit a praiseworthy zeal to ascertain their woes and promise redress? No—the meetings are put down by proclamation or declared illegal: the military are called out—the artillery is got ready to cannonade the people—and the middle-classes are invited to rally against the “wicked and to seditious mob.” If a poor starving wretch, driven to desperation by the spectacle of a famished wife and perishing children, is caught in the act of self-appropriating one of the birds or animals which God gave to be the sustenance of a human family, is he justified and obeying the law of nature which prompts him to procure food for himself and those dependent on him? No—he is dragged like a thief or robber before a magistrate, and mercilessly plunged into gaol, while his wife and children are immured in another prison called a workhouse, and where the innocent little ones are ruthlessly separated from their mother. If a poor man be oppressed by a rich one, can the former obtain cheap or gratuitous Justice? No—the law courts

are utterly closed against the individual who does not possess a well-filled purse. The fiction is that tribunals are open to everybody; and so is the London Tavern to those who can pay for turtle and venison. In fact, there are myriads of laws by which a poor man may be hanged transported, imprisoned, fined, or even whipped: but there is not one single law on our statute-book by which he can obtain justice free of cost.

And all this is denominated British Freedom! But let me look a little farther into the subject, without particularly dwelling upon the condition of the enslaved masses: and the result of the enquiry will perhaps be to show that even the favoured classes themselves are not quite so free as they fancy themselves. We have in this country a Court of Chancery, which out-herods in the iniquity of its procedure for cold-blooded cruelty of the Spanish Inquisition. The court of Chancery kills individuals by a slow and heart-breaking process, as torturing to the mind as the punishments of the rack, the question by water, the thumb-screw, the boot, and the pulley, could possibly have been to the body. There are millions of money locked up in Chancery: there are hundreds of cases which have lasted years and years, the original suitors having long since paid the debt of nature, leaving to their sons the lamentable heritage of a process in that tremendous tribunal. Is this a specimen of British Freedom? Again there is a Church Establishment which mulets those who have not the slightest sympathy with its mode of worship—who repudiated its dogmas—who disavow its spiritual authority—and who never cross the threshold of its temples. Yet the honest, conscientious, and enlightened dissenter must pay to support a bloated church which enjoys larger revenues than those of all the other Church Establishments in the world put together. Is this a proof of British Freedom? Again, the industry

of the country is taxed to the amount of twenty-eight millions annually, to pay the interest of a national debt which the aristocracy and landowners contracted in order to carry on ruinous wars to suit their own selfish purposes, or else to pander to the ambition of royalty. Then, look at all the immunities and privileges enjoyed by the favoured few,—look at the Pension List, the lavish expenditure of the government, the unequal pressure of the taxation, the costliness of our aristocratic institutions, the army of titled cormorants quartered upon the public purse, the shoals of sinecurists living in shameless indolence, the scandalous jobbery constantly brought to light in every department of the State, the expensive management of our useful colonies, and the downright loss attached to the useless ones,—look at our Civil List and Royal Household, the Crown lands, the Diplomatic Service, the Army and the Navy, the Government Offices, the Dockyards and Arsenals,—look at the wanton profusion, the wicked waste, and the flagrant abuses which are here cursorily summed up—and then let me be shown what British Freedom is and where it exists.

The people are told that they have the right of public meeting to discuss their grievances and petition for redress. But this right is a mere fiction: because there are a dozen laws on the statute-book by which it may be suppressed the moment its exercise becomes inconvenient to “the powers that be.” Ask for petitioning a corrupt House of Commons to reform itself, or a House of Lords to do away with itself, the thing is laughable; and moreover there is something derogatory in the idea of the people “humbly praying” their own servants to act with common honesty, justice, and propriety. Again, we are told that we enjoy the privilege of Trial by Jury and that every man is tried by his peers. The former assurance is false because the

Judge is the real jury, putting his own interpretation upon the law and insisting upon having a verdict returned “according to the law of the matter”—that is to say according to his special mode of explaining or colouring that law. As for assertion that a man is tried by his peers, or equals, it is scandalously false—inasmuch as the jury-list consists only of members of the upper and middle classes, and the millions of working-men are carefully excluded from it. Every working man, therefore, who gets into a scrape, is tried by his superiors (so to speak), and not by his equals: and of course, in political cases, he has not the ghost of a chance at the hands of a partizan Judge and a jury of shopkeepers detesting the principles of the accused. Again, we are taught to glorify ourselves on the enjoyment of Habeas Corpus: but this is a privilege only allowed in times of tranquillity, and therefore when it is scarcely wanted. In seasons of menacing popular discontent, it is suspended—as was constantly the case in the reign of George III, and recently with regard to poor Ireland. Besides, it is utterly valueless to the poor man on account of the expense attached to the procedure: and the myriads of summary adjudication by the paid or unpaid magistracy, it does not apply at all. Then, again, we are told that we enjoy religious freedom and unshackled press. The Gorham Case doubtless speaks volumes in favour of liberty of conscience; and not four years have elapsed since thirteen labourers in the north of England were committed to gaol for a fortnight for not attending divine worship! Besides, is it not a precious mockery of religious freedom when Dissenters, Catholics, and Jews are compelled to support the Established Church, and when the Irish Church stares us in the face? As for the “unshackled press,” I can assure my readers that before I was able to publish this newspaper, I was

compelled to find four securities in heavy amounts each, for the satisfaction of the authorities at Somerset House; and I think that this circumstance, coupled with the heavy duty upon paper, the penny stamp on every copy issued, and the levy of eighteen-pence upon every advertisement inserted, will not speak much in favour of the freedom of British press. The taxes on knowledge are a more effectual barrier to the spread of intelligence than any system of censorship which a Russian Autocrat or a German Kaiser could possibly devise. Then, as for the right of commenting on political matters, there is no such right at all; it is a privilege enjoyed to a certain extent by *toleration* only—it is not a right established by law;—and all toleration is in itself tyranny. The reporting of the debates in Parliament is permitted upon the same ground: the galleries may be cleared of representatives of the press at the caprice or whim of any one Member of either House.

It is true that many of the most obnoxious powers vested in the law are not often put into force: but still the elements of a grinding despotism *do* exist in our systems, and may be called into exercise at any moment. It is not sufficient that political slavery should merely remain in abeyance; it should be eradicated altogether. And even were that process of extirpation to be carried into effect with regards to the laws that are generally supposed to be obsolete, there would still exist, as I have shown, a countless host of real grievances actually present and in full operation at the present time. In a word, British Freedom is a Humbug—“a mockery, a delusion, and a snare.” There exists in the country just enough of such bastard freedom to enable the privileged orders, comprising a few thousand individuals, to prey upon the people more effectually than any single despot would being able to do: for under the

colour of the law and with the pretext of a representative system, more real injustice may be accomplished, more virtual tyranny exercised, and more black-mail levied in the shape of taxation, than could possibly be the case in an absolute monarchy where the *one* individual would be responsible for the whole aggregate of these iniquities.

Universal Suffrage

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Universal Suffrage is the right of every community; and wherever the franchise is denied or limited, tyranny and injustice are sure to be the characteristics of the government. Every man ought to have a voice in the election of those representatives, delegates, or agents, who make the laws which affect his life, his liberty, his property, or his labour; and to tax a man who is unrepresented, is the most scandalous wrong and the most flagrant injury that ever human arrogance conceived on the one hand or that human patience ever submitted to on the other. Those men who aid in supporting a system which permits the few to enjoy privileges whence the many are excluded, are enemies to civilisation and traitors to their country;—and those who come forward with half-measures of reform, basing their limited policy on the ground of expediency, are utterly undeserving of the confidence of the public. The former are the avowed and open advocates of a monstrous despotism: the latter are the sneaking, cowardly, pusillanimous friends of a petty tyranny. For how stands the fact? Taking the male adult population of Great Britain and Ireland at six millions, there are at present five millions excluded from the franchise,—five million serfs and slaves whose lives, liberties, chattels are all at the mercy of the privileged million. For the million of voters can, through the medium of their representatives, inflict all kinds of wrong, injury, and injustice upon the five millions who have no

representatives at all. If, then, an additional three millions be enfranchised, thereby giving right of suffrage to four millions altogether, two millions will yet remain in a condition of bondage, serfdom, and slavery. These two millions would have four millions against them: capital, monopoly, and petty tyranny would be leagued together against the unfortunates whose only source of subsistence is their labour. The influence of this partial enfranchisement would therefore be most disastrous to those who remain unenfranchised. As matters now stand, the unenfranchised constitute the majority; and the representatives of the enfranchised minority, feeling how false their position is, dare not go to extremes against that vast body of the population. But if the enfranchised once constituted the majority, and the unenfranchised the minority, the representatives of the former would no longer experience any compunction or alarm in pursuing a policy that would invest capital and monopoly with a more terrific influence than they have ever yet been enabled to exercise with regard to wages and labour. The only remedy for existing wrongs and the only cure for present abuses will be found in the principle of Universal Suffrage.

But supposing that it is only possible to emancipate a section of the community in the first instance,—the question then arises as to which class now suffers most by the privation of the franchise? In other words, which class stands in greatest need of the franchise? It assuredly is not the class of petty shopkeepers and small householders; because their interests are pretty well identical with those of the grade above them, and are therefore represented in the House of Commons. But it is the class whose interests are unrepresented in that House,—the class whose wrongs are never acknowledged by that House: it

is the class of the wages-serfs, and the labour-slaves that first of all stand in need of the elective franchise, If any such sectional preference must be shown. The claim to the franchise should be based, then,—not upon the possession of something,— but upon the possession of *nothing*. Those who are compelled to live by the sweat of their brow, and whose earnings are precarious, should be considered before those who have acquired a little property and who do not live from hand to mouth. It is an idle mockery to offer bread to those who enjoy plentiful meals: whatever is to be given away, must be bestowed upon the hungry and starving. Let the advocates of partial reform, if only partial reform they must have, devise a scheme by which the process of emancipation shall be upon an ascending, and not a descending scale,—a scheme that shall commence by enfranchising the lowest, the most wretched, and the most oppress, instead of merely widening the circle of that class which possesses property and is therefore already assured of the means of subsistence. Depend upon it, ye Moderate Reformers, the miners who excavate the mineral from the bowels of the earth to provide you with cheerful fires—the factory slaves who toil-so hard and waste their vital energies so soon in producing you comfortable clothing—the agricultural labourers who rear the crops that furnish bread for your tables—and the whole brotherhood of mechanics, artisans, and journeymen of all kinds and descriptions, these are the persons that really want the right of suffrage, in preference to any other class as yet unenfranchised.

A mere rate-paying qualification is unjust, delusive, and impracticable. It does not apply to Scotland at all; and the Scotch would therefore be no gainers by the enactment of such a measure. Nor would it do more in England and Ireland than

widen to the extent of about two millions the present electoral body. It would leave the merits of claimants to the mercy of Registration Courts and Revising Barristers; and every individual whose name was inserted upon the rating-books, would become liable for the payment of the parochial rates. Now, as by far the larger proportion of the working classes dwell in lodgings, such lodgers would be held responsible for the rates of the house in which they reside; and if their landlord did not pay them, their own little property would be subject to seizure. Nor would they have any remedy in the case of a bankrupt or runaway landlord; inasmuch as their rents being paid weekly, there would be no arrears whence they might deduct the amount of rates they had been called upon to pay. With the working-man who possesses a little furniture, such a risk would operate to frighten him from making the claim to be rated; and he would prefer the abandonment of his right, to the chance of being sold up under the exercise of that right. Again, a large portion of the industrious population is necessarily migratory,—the artizan and the operative removing their abodes to the neighbourhoods in which they procure work and thus thousands and thousands of families are constantly shifting their residences from one parish to another. All these would be excluded from the franchise, under a system which adopts a rate-paying clause and a twelvemonth's fixed residence. Single men occupying double-bedded rooms, would likewise be shut out from the enjoyment of the suffrage upon such terms: and, in fine, the niggard policy which dictates such milk-and-water measures of reform, would work most furiously, most unjustly, and most oppressively towards the veritable sons of toil. They must therefore insist upon the advocacy of Universal Suffrage; and they must give no man,

and no class of men, credit for sincerity or honesty, who propose anything short of that comprehensive principle.

It has been said by moderate reformers that what they offer must be accepted by the millions as an instalment. But I will speedily prove that it is no instalment at all. Suppose that a tradesman, finding himself in difficulties, calls a meeting of his creditors and addresses them in the following manner:—"Gentlemen, you are twenty in number, and I owe you each a hundred pounds. But I have only got a thousand pounds to offer you; and therefore what I propose is that I shall pay ten of you in full—each his hundred pounds—and leave the other ten to get their due at any future time, whenever I may be able or shall think fit to pay out." Let us suppose, then, that this iniquitous and preposterous arrangement is carried out: could it be said that the whole body of this tradesman's creditors had received an instalment towards the liquidation of their claims? Certainly not: half are paid in full—and the other half get nothing at all. So it is with a moderate measure of reform, applied to the community at large. Some will obtain the elective franchise; others will get nothing. The result is that there is no equitable instalment at all, and the illustration shows how scandalous it is to advocate measures which are exclusive in their aims and partial in their operation.

The Principal argument used against the adoption of Universal Suffrage, is that the masses are not intelligent enough to make a just and proper use of the elective franchise. This is a mere assertion, glibly made, and easily refuted. But even if it were founded on fact, it has nothing to do with the justice of the: principle contended for: because, in the first place, the people need not be right to legitimize their actions—and, in the second place, the object of representation is to legislate for

the welfare and benefit of the whole community, and not for the interests of a fractional portion of that community. Every individual has rights to be defended and interests to be represented: and therefore he should have a voice in choosing the agents—or Members of Parliament who are to defend those rights and represent those interests. The amount of intelligence such an individual may possess, has nothing to-do with the matter; it is sufficient that he is a citizen, liable to be taxed—compelled to labour like the rest—and bound to obey the laws and perform the duties of citizenship. His position, then, as an item in the great social aggregate, constitutes his right to have a voice in levying the taxes which he pays, making the laws which he must obey, settling the duties which he has to fulfil, and appointing the Executive which is to administer the general affairs of the community. The amount of civilisation and the degree of intelligence that there may be in a country, have nothing to do with the principle of the suffrage: political rights should be enjoyed by barbarians, as well as by the enlightened portion of mankind;—and Universal Suffrage may be exercised by the savages of the South Sea Islands as beneficially for their own peculiar wants and interests, as it would be by the most polished and intelligent community on the face of the earth. All men are born with natural rights, no matter whether it be in the Cannibal Islands or in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland.

Intelligence, therefore, has nothing to do with the justice of the principle of Universal Suffrage and consequently, even if the masses in this country were deficient in intelligence, it would be no honest and proper reason for depriving them of their rights. But the fact is that they are not deficient on that score; and it is their intelligence, and not their ignorance, which

is feared by the opponents of Universal Suffrage. The upholders of those flagrant abuses which scandalise this country,—the sinecurists, placemen, and pensioners,— the titled aristocracy, the capitalist, and the monopolist,—the churchmen, the landowners, and the manufacturers,—all those classes look with terror and dismay upon a principle which will enable the people to take the broom in hand and cleanse the Augean stable of filth and corruption. Those persons who are directly interested in maintaining the present condition of things, are vehement in their predictions of “a bloody democracy”—“repudiation of the National Debt”—“social anarchy and confusion”—“the destruction of all our most-valued institutions”—“the division of property”—and a host of other “calamities” which they declare would inevitably follow the adoption of Universal Suffrage. Most insufferable nonsense! Why, the people are strong enough to create “a bloody democracy,” with or without Universal Suffrage, if they chose to do so but, thank God! they have no such sanguinary instincts. The predilections for hanging, drawing, and quartering—the thirst for blood—the adoration of the political scaffold—the habit of persecuting those who entertain particular opinions— and the entire system of coercion, tyranny, cruelty, violent repression, outrage, cannonading the populace, and bludgeoning the multitudes,—all these exquisite “refinements” belong exclusively to the upper classes. The affairs of Continental Europe have fully proven that, while Democracy has been magnanimous and Republicanism humane to a degree, there have, been plenty of “Bloody Aristocracies” and “Red Monarchies.” The people of England are not less intelligent, not less humane, and not less magnanimous than the glorious patriots of Franco, Italy,

Prussia, Austria, and Hungary; and so far from there being any reason to suppose that bloodshed and anarchy would follow the establishment of Universal Suffrage in this country, it is certain beyond all possibility of doubt that amongst the first results thereof would be the abolition of death-punishments, the humanizing of our criminal code, and the adoption of measures to ensure general contentment amongst those classes which are so deeply and justly dissatisfied now.

No—law and order will not disappear on that day when the people's rights shall be recognised: the tranquillity of the country can only be disturbed by an obstinate refusal to acknowledge those rights. The intelligence of the working classes has made almost incredible strides during the last few years: it is progressing at a railroad pace—marching onward with the velocity of transmissions by the electric telegraph. What Aristocracy—what Government—what System can much longer resist so tremendous a power? Be wise in time, ye rulers of the land!—the influence of Mind shall prove more potent than the brute violence of armies—more effectual than the whole scheme of repression and all the ramifications of coercion, tyranny, and intimidation. The people of England deserve the acknowledgment of their Rights, even if it were really a boon and a liberal concession on the part of the privileged orders to recognise them. Yes—the industrious millions have been slaves and serfs to the favoured few so long, that the commonest sentiment of gratitude—if not of justice and of prudence—should now lead to their emancipation.

To the Electors of the Borough of Finsbury

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Gentlemen, in offering myself as a candidate for your suffrages, should any vacancy occur in the representation of your Borough, I deem it my duty to give you an account of the opinions which I entertain upon the leading political topics of the day, and which opinions I am fully prepared to proclaim and defend within the walls of the House of Commons, as fearlessly as I have hitherto enunciated them at public meetings or in any various meetings. In the brief Address which I published Inst week, my profession of faith was thus rapidly outlined—"am an advocate for Universal Suffrage, the Vote by Ballot, Short Parliaments, the Abolition of the Property Qualification, the Equalization of the Electoral Districts (basing the representation upon population), and the Payment of Members. I am also an advocate for the Separation of Church and State, an enemy to the existing Poor Law, and a friend to Free Trade in the most comprehensive meaning of the term. I am likewise convinced that the most rigorous economy must be introduced into the management of the National Finances, by the diminution of the cost of all the Government institutions, the total abolition of all sinecures, and a thorough revision of the Pension-List." Such was the hasty summary which I last week gave of the leading features of any political creed: I shall now take the details seriatim and enlarge upon them, so that my principles may be thoroughly understood and my mind fully laid bare.

Universal Suffrage—It appears to me the most scandalous injustice to exclude from the franchise any male adult who is of sound mind and untainted by any infamous crime. In every community, each member has a right to have a voice in choosing the representatives who are to make the laws affecting his property, his liberty, or his life; and it is a flagrant injustice for a section of the community to monopolise the choice of the agents or delegates who are to legislate for the whole mass. The result of such a system is that class-interests are alone represented; and hence the existence of privileged orders in a community where all should enjoy equal political rights. So long as the franchise shall remain in the hands of a few, the many who are excluded, cannot fail to be discontented. Let the entire population be represented, and the country will enjoy a tranquillity such as it has never known before, and such as no circumstances nor individuals can possibly disturb. The best security for internal peace and the best, guarantee for a flourishing commerce, are to be found in the general happiness of the people. Wherefore is the whole nation now agitated by Parliamentary Reformers, Chartists, Socialists, and Communists? Because the masses are deprived of their natural rights and will never rest until they shall have obtained them. And so long as this widespread discontent is unappeased and the popular claims are disregarded, society will be always in danger of convulsion, panic, incendiarism, and perhaps revolution. It is especially the interest of the middle class to insist upon the franchise for the working-class. The two together would speedily make successful head against the Aristocracy which plunders, enslaves, despises, and hates them both. Under our much-vaunted Constitution, we have already had numerous civil wars, outbreaks, and rebellions, which have

principally arisen from the arrogance and greediness of the aristocracy on the one hand, and the discontent of the millions on the other. The adoption of Universal Suffrage would level a death-blow at the pride, insolence, and monstrous privileges of the aristocracy, and would render the masses contented and happy. In a country where all are represented fairly and where the government is settled, there can be no amount of discontent sufficient to create disturbance: the minority willingly bow to the majority, each party trusting only to the results of the elections to determine which class of opinions shall be in the ascendant. Wherever Universal Suffrage prevails and is properly protected by accessory rights (all of which I shall presently detail), the grumbles must of necessity be in the minority. The English of all classes, the aristocracy excepted, are constantly complaining against the Government for one thing or another: but in the United States of America, where Universal Suffrage prevails, the citizens are always congratulating themselves upon their freedom, their prosperity, and their superiority over other nations. The difference is striking; and the explanation is easy. The English Government is not raised up by the whole people, but only by a small section of the community; therefore all who have no share in elevating the Ministers to power, are naturally discontented. But in America the Government springs as it were from the whole mass of the people: its power and authority are based upon Universal Suffrage—and therefore is it impossible that any party should think of upsetting a Government by force. In England, the House of Commons has really no amoral power: it is not regarded as the representation of the community at large, but merely as the exponent of the small section constituting the electors. Its laws are obeyed unwillingly, and

the taxes it levies are paid reluctantly. Where one interested person praises the present system, ten thousand abhor and fear it.

The Vote by Ballot—The suffrage should be protected by the Ballot. Every man has a right to give his vote freely and independently—apart from any sinister influences, coercion, bribery, intimidation, or over-persuasion. Not only is this method of voting the most just, but likewise the most convenient. Even the Times and Chronicle acknowledge that the French elections, at which the Ballot is used, are conducted in an orderly manner that contrasts most-favourably with similar proceedings in England. The experience of the United States of America is likewise conclusive in behalf of the Ballot. Secret voting cannot possibly lead to mischief; whereas open voting is fraught with innumerable evils. The Ballot has been denounced as un-English: but surely it is far more un-English for tenant-farmers to be driven like sheep to the hustings, to record their votes precisely as their Landlord thinks fit to dictate. So long as some men are rich and others poor—some invested with authority and others occupying the humblest positions—some wielding great influence, and others enjoying none at all, so long, I say, will bribery, coercion, and intimidation be practised at elections, unless the Ballot be adopted. This method of voting now prevails at the West End Clubs and is used for recording the judgments of Courts-Martial : it is therefore practised and found necessary in some cases by the very men who are its most violent opponents in the House of Commons.

Annual Parliaments—Short reckonings make long friends. A lady or gentleman, when hiring a servant, agrees for a month's wages, or a month's warning. The gentleman would be

indeed astonished **if** his footman insisted upon being engaged for seven years; and the *lady* would be shocked if her maid refused to accept the place upon any other terms. The idea of having to keep a servant for such a period, without the power of getting rid of him or her, no matter how incompetent to fulfil the duties of the situation, or how vile the conduct pursued—such an idea, I say, would be preposterous. And yet the People's Servants insist upon this outrageous bargain: they demand a lease of power for seven years—and the consequence is that, they often turn around, when once elected, and defy their constituents. Elections should be annual, not only to compel the representatives to give an account of their stewardship, but likewise to secure due respect for the decision of the majority. Representation is, after all, only delegation. A certain number of individuals choose one of their body to expound their interests, vindicate their rights, and proclaim their wrongs, in a particular assembly and the person thus chosen is the agent, or delegate, of the individuals so choosing him. If he dissent from them, or if they have reason to be dissatisfied with him, the connexion should cease: he can no longer represent them conscientiously or effectually; while they remain not only unrepresented but also positively injured, by the antagonistic policy which he pursues. They must select another agent, and he may find another constituency, or else retire into private life. The idea that certain men should make a trade or profession of politics, and that seats must be found for them, is preposterous. Besides, through the medium of frequent elections, a constant infusion of democratic talent and honesty will be poured into the House of Common: men will not hold their seats long enough to achieve downright mischief—and they will be ousted the moment they show symptoms of

becoming mischievous. If the frequency of elections be objected to on the ground that they convulse the country and paralyse trade, I answer that, protected by the Ballot, the elections would pass off with the utmost tranquillity: there would be no squabbings at the hustings and polling booths—there would not even be any necessity for can canvassing. Besides, even if this peaceful mode of procedure could not be guaranteed by means of the Ballot, it would surely be worthwhile for merchants and tradesmen to submit to a little flatness in the markets for one week out of every fifty-two, in order that their affairs might progress all the more prosperously during the remaining fifty-one weeks of the year.

The Abolition of the Property Qualification—The monstrous system of judging a person's intelligence by the depth of his breeches' pocket, cannot require much argument in order to expose its infamy. With respect to mere voters, it would of course be annihilated by the adoption of Universal Suffrage. It must not, however, be retained in reference to members themselves: for its object is only to secure class-legislation—and its results are the aggrandizement of unprincipled Aristocrats, and the oppression of the millions. Besides, the principle is not even now universal in its application. The representatives of Scotland and of the English Universities require no property qualification; nor do the eldest sons of peers. Not a word can therefore be logically or truthfully said in its defence: while a thousand arguments may be brought against it. But without dwelling at any length upon the point, I will illustrate the folly and injustice of the system, and then pass on to the discussion of another subject. Sir Robert Peel is a man of great talent and sound intellect: this must be admitted by even his most bitter enemies. He is now qualified

by the possession of property to take his seat in the House of Commons. But if some dreadful misfortune swept away all that property to-morrow morning, and reduced him to poverty, he would become disqualified to remain in Parliament, although his mental powers would be still the same. On the other hand, if Fortune suddenly rained down a golden shower upon the head of the meanest, most grovelling, wretched mendicant now crawling in the gutter —this individual would become qualified, by that fact alone, and all in moment, to enter the House of Commons if he could find a constituency to elect him, although we may suppose him to be unable either to read or write. So much for the property qualification.

The Equalization of the Electoral Districts—The representation should be based upon the population—so many delegates to so many constituents in each electoral district. A miserable village-town should not be permitted to send to Parliament as many Members as a great city or half a county; while many places are totally unrepresented altogether. Dungarvon, with 196 electors, returns two Members: but the West Riding of Yorkshire, with its 87,000 electors, only returns two Members. The 181 electors of Harwich have two representatives: so have the 16,000 electors of Finsbury. Thetford with 160 electors, and 9,800 inhabitants, is as well represented as Manchester with its 18,000 electors and its 187,000 inhabitants. Thus we have the merest handfuls of persons represented in the House of Commons by the same amount of influence as that enjoyed by immense masses of the population. The atrocity of such a system needs not another word to prove the necessity of amendment; the scheme was devised by aristocratic monopolists, who, by controlling the votes and appointing the representatives of the petty boroughs,

have succeeded in counteracting the influence of the great cities. There never was in the whole world such a greedy, grasping, ravenous set of cormorants as the British Aristocracy.

The Payment of Members—The real object of representation is to obtain the services of men of talent and honesty, without pausing to inquire whether they be rich or poor. But the tendency of aristocratic manoeuvres, has been to exclude real genius and sterling probity as much as possible from the House of Commons, in order to make room for the arrogance and insolence, the shallowness and stupidity of despicable lordlings. The representative should be paid for his services, as well as the Minister. It would be as absurd and as preposterous to have unsalaried judges, officers in the army and navy, or government clerks, as unpaid representatives. They are all the servants of the peoples and the people very naturally suspect those who are so eager and anxious to serve them for nothing. Besides, if the admitted principle be that all classes and grades in the community ought to be represented, it is quite clear that this aim cannot be fully carried out unless by means of the payment of Members. For if the Army be represented by a sprinkling of generals or colonels in the House, the Navy by a few admirals or post-captains, and the Law by heaven knows how many attorneys,—if again, the landed, commercial, manufacturing, financial, shipping, and railway interests are each and all represented in that House by men identified with those interests,—then also must the working classes have *their* representatives in the same place. The most intelligent and capable men belonging to the ranks of Labour should be chosen for this purpose: but as such individuals by abandoning their industrial pursuits, would renounce the sources of their livelihood, they must necessarily be paid for their services. If

Universal Suffrage, the Vote by Ballot, Annual Parliaments, the Abolition of the Property Qualification, and Equal Electoral Districts, were all conceded to-morrow, without annexing the principle of Payment of Members, the working-classes would still continue virtually unrepresented. For representation would remain in the hands of the wealthy;—and such a monopoly is utterly inconsistent with all true notions of justice and fair dealing.

The Separation of Church and State—affords no parallel to the tremendous anomalies of the English and Irish Church Establishments. The very name of the Protestant Religion seems to be desecrated by the infamy of those systems. Bloated Bishops and starving curates constitute the extreme features of the picture: the interval is filled up with pluralist Archdeacons, Deans given to Nepotism, rectors and vicars wallowing in luxury, and Simony boldly and openly proclaimed through the advertising columns of the Times newspaper! In Ireland, the case is more scandalous—more vile—more atrocious still: for there the Church is not even in accordance with the religious sentiments of one-tenth part of the whole population. The two Church Establishments possess immense revenues; and yet all the property in the country is taxed to swell the contents of the ecclesiastical coffers. Jews and Dissenters, Catholics and Nonconformists of all descriptions, are thus robbed and plundered to enrich the most luxurious, bigoted, intolerant, and mammon-worshipping clergy in the whole universe. Yet, with all the enormous wealth they possess, the means in their power, and the opportunities they can command, this clergy leave the people utterly without any useful knowledge and practical information; while the religious instruction they affect to impart, is so mystified by their superstition or their ignorance,

that it does harm rather than good to the cause of Christianity. Indeed, were, it not for the praiseworthy exertions of the Dissenters of all denominations, throughout the country, there would be no really available instruction of a religious kind at all.

The Existing Poor Law—This scheme has proved the most effectual that Satan ever succeeded in introducing upon earth, as an engine of torture for the rich to use against the poor. The fact—the irrefragable fact—that starving wretches prefer a felon's gaol to the workhouse, is a scandal and a disgrace to England's civilization. The miserable fare doled out in the pauper-bastilles—the myriad petty tyrannies to which the poor inmates are subjected—the separation of man and wife, and children from their parents—the bandying of applicants about from place to place before relief is granted—the horrible cruelties that are engendered by the system—the irresponsible position of guardians—and the unconstitutional dictatorship which presides over the administration of the whole infernal scheme,—these flagrant insults to every sentiment of philanthropy, justice, and decency, demand the annihilation of the existing Poor Laws, and the substitution of a rational and humane code.

Free Trade—I am a friend to Free Trade in the most comprehensive meaning of the term. That is to say, I am an advocate for free trade in everything; and my opinion is that partial free-trade measures are positively injurious to many grades of the working-classes—while the boldest stretch of policy in the proper direction would confer the utmost benefit upon all grades. But let the Custom-House be abolished—let the Excise Office be shut up;—then let us have, as a corollary, direct instead of indirect, taxation;—and until these sweeping

measures be accomplished, there never will be real and legitimate free trade in this country. As for Protection—such Protection, as the Duke of Richmond claims, I abhor it, as much as I despise the arrogant, impudent, shameless descendant of a courtesan who demands it: but there is a kind of Protection which *I do* want to see afforded—and that is the Protection of Labour against the tyranny of Capital, and the interests of the working classes against the evils of Monopoly and Competition.

The National Finances, the Pension List, &c.—The aristocracy has contrived to saddle the greater proportion of the, taxation upon the middle and working classes. Taking the revenue at fifty-six millions of pounds sterling, property contributes nine millions—Trade and industry forty-seven millions. That is to say, the landlords pay less than a sixth of the whole amount thus-raised; while the middle and working classes pay more the five-sixths. In the year 1814, the rental of the landlords was computed at sixty millions, now it is estimated at ninety-five millions. Consequently, the real property of the landlords has increased by an annual value by thirty millions. A guinea will moreover now purchase three times the amount of food and manufactured goods to what it could procure in 1814; and thus the wealth of the landlords may be said to have-quadrupled since that date. And yet so far from taking back upon themselves any of the burthens which they have managed to shift upon the shoulders of Trade and Industry, they are at this very moment endeavouring to plunge the country into revolution in order to obtain farther immunities. In fact, what with the tremendous privileges of landlordism, the unbounded extravagance of the Government, the frightful costliness of all our public institutions, and the

shoals of harpies preying upon the national purse, the people of this country are plundered, pillaged, and robbed in such a manner as no other nation in the universe would submit to. The lavish expenditure of the Court,—nearly: 400,000*l.* a year for the Queen, 80,000*l.* a year for Prince Albert, a like sum for the Duchess of Kent, 21,000*l.* a year for the King of Hanover, 27,000*l.* for the Duke of Cambridge, other items of the same kind,—contrast strikingly enough with the 16,000*l.* a year which is the whole cost of the American Executive! England pays four millions sterling annually for the government of her thirty-five or thirty-six colonies: the Americans pay one million and a quarter for the Local government of thirty states. The English colonies contain five millions of population; the American States twenty-two millions. Out of the shoals of cormorant placemen who live upon the sweats and marrow of the sons and daughters of toil, we have no less than 841 pensioners, each receiving more than 1000*l.* a year—these legalised Dick Turpins enjoying an aggregate of 1,685,901*l.* annually. | There are 25,000 government *employés* with an aggregate income of three millions. The salaries of the Treasury Bench are 57,000*l.* a year: the Home Secretary's Department 28,000*l.*; the Foreign Secretary's 76,000*l.*; the Colonial Secretary's 36,000*l.* a year; the Privy Council costs 43,000*l.*; the Paymaster-General's Office 31,000*l.*: the Poor-Law Commissioners 240,000*l.* In the Palace, the Lord Chamberlain's Department has the control of 66,000*l.* a year; the Lord Steward, 36,000*l.*; the Master of the Horse, 27,000*l.* The bacon, butter, and eggs, annually consumed in the palace costs more than 4,000*l.* a year; and the President of the United States only receives an annual income of 5,000*l.* The Lord Lieutenant of Ireland has 20,000*l.* year; the Lord Chancellor of

England, 14,000*l.*; and the Governor-General of India, 25,000*l.* Two vineries in one of the royal palaces recently cost 2,960*l.*; the average of 42,000*l.* a year may be allowed for the repairs of those palaces; the enlargement of Buckingham Palace has already cost nearly a quarter of a million within the last two or three years; and all the world knows that the new stables and mews for Royalty cost 70,000*l.* Upwards of a million sterling have been expended upon the improvements of Windsor Castle since the year 1824; and since the accession of George III, to the throne, the Civil List has amounted to one hundred and two millions sterling! “This sum,” says Mr. Wade, “expended in the maintenance of a single family, forms an enormous item in the national outgoings.” The Royal Yacht has cost about 120,000*l.*; and the Fairy (tender to the Royal Yacht), about 40,000*l.*,—The annual cost of these two yachts in coals and wages of the crew, is about 9000*l.* Our Ambassadors have annual salaries amounting to 140,000*l.*, Besides pensions and superannuated allowances to the amount of 39,038*l.*; with further charges for outfits, travelling expenses, and ambassadorial residences. From the Post Office revenues, the Duke of Marlborough receives a pension of 4,000*l.* a year the Duke of Grafton, 3,407*l.*; this latter nobleman also receives from the Excise revenues, an additional pension of 7,191*l.* But wherefore are these two Dukes thus allowed to foist their patrician pauperism upon the country? The former, because he is descended from a wholesale butcher of the human race; and the latter for even a viler and more detestable reason—because he is descended from one of the infamous women who figured in the Court of Charles II! This last-mentioned reason also applies to the scandalous origin of the Duke of Richmond’s annual income of 17,000*l.*; and the Duke of St Albans is likewise a pensioner on

similar terms. But I am sick of the task of accumulating these frightful proofs of wanton extravagance and lavish profusion in our expenditure. Well and truly does Mr. Wade observe, in his admirable book entitled *Unreformed Abuses*, that “of all the scandals reflecting disgrace on the English Government, the Pension List is the most scandalous. Here are to be found the offshoots and hangers-on of Royalty—aristocratic paupers who ‘cannot dig,’ but who are not ashamed ‘to beg’—the drones of the public hive—the political jobbers who have helped to sink us in the swamp of financial difficulties—all eating bread by the sweat of other men’s brows, and flourishing on the exactions by which a whole nation is impoverished.” But just to show how we English people are taxed, under a show of freedom, let me contrast our position with that of the countries which make no pretence to any freedom at all. It has been calculated that the amount of taxation per head is in England, 22l, 12s. 6d.; in Russia, 9s. 9d.; in Austria, 11s, 6d.; in Prussia, 12s, 4d.

Surely these facts speak volumes! Before I conclude this letter I must observe that I am an inveterate foe to the scandalous, vile, and abominable Window-Tax,—likewise to the not less atrocious Taxes upon Knowledge. In respect to the long mooted point of marriage with a deceased wife’s sister, I am entirely in favour of such alliances,—believing, that as there is no blood-relationship between the parties, there can be nothing repugnant to religion or nature in such unions; and moreover that the sister of a deceased wife would be far more likely to make a good step-mother to those children of whom she is already the aunt, than a mere stranger having no Kinship with the motherless offspring.

Electors of Finsbury!—I have addressed you at great length: but the inquiry upon which I have thus entered, is one of paramount importance. The abuses in our political institutions are manifold; and if I have succeeded in convincing you that I understand them, you will perhaps think fit, should an election take place, to afford me the opportunity of displaying my zeal in the endeavour, to reform them. As an elector of the Borough of Finsbury, I must take leave to express a hope that Messrs. Duncombe and Wakley will be enabled to give such explanations as will prove satisfactory to their constituents generally; and should the plea of ill health be alleged in either or both cases, I respectfully but earnestly submit that such an apology should receive the most liberal and generous consideration. But, on the other hand, should an election take place, I shall present myself as a candidate for your suffrages: and being a staunch advocate for Annual Parliaments, I should feel it my duty (if chosen to represent you) to resign the trust into your hands again at any moment that my conduct merited your disapprobation.

I have the honour to remain,

Gentlemen,

Your faithful and obedient servant,

George W.M. Reynolds.

Society and Public Opinion

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The proper meaning of the word *Society*, as applied to a community, is "the union of the many in a common interest;" and the phrase *Public Opinion*, in its veritable sense, signifies the sentiments entertained on any particular point by the great majority of the nation. *Society*, then, as applied to this kingdom, means the whole people of Great Britain and Ireland; and *Public Opinion* is the expression of the sentiments, desires, and inclinations of the great mass of the people. In short, *Society* is the People: and *Public Opinion* is the People's Will.

But the Privileged Orders of this and every other country where there are class-interests, not only usurp all rights, but likewise appropriate to themselves the exclusive use of certain words, forms, and phrases which have a general meaning and an universal application. When Louis the Fourteenth's Ministers remonstrated with him on the neglected interests of the State, the crowned miscreant replied with the arrogance of a demigod, "*I am the State!*" In the same manner do the Aristocracy and the Middle-Classes of this country insolently proclaim, "*We are Society!*"—and if asked what Public Opinion means, they would respond as haughtily, "*Our opinion!*" The toiling millions are neither recognised as belonging to Society, nor as having a right to entertain any independent sentiments which may help to constitute Public Opinion.

These may appear strange and bold assertions on my part: but I am fully prepared to prove them. Let him who doubts their

truth study the debates in the Houses of Parliament; let him read the newspapers which serve as the special organs of the upper and middle classes; let him note the style of discourse in which individuals belonging to those classes are wont to indulge on all occasions; and he cannot fail to discover how completely the privileged orders regard themselves as the only sections of the community entitled to the exercise of rights, the vindication of interests, and the expression of opinions. In the House of Lords and the House of Commons, the oft-repeated phrases are—"Society requires such-and-such measures;" "so-and-so must be done for the good of society;"—or else flaming eulogiums are passed upon "the laws and institutions which sustain and protect the whole framework of society." Substitute for "society" the words "exclusive interests," and the real object of legislation, as it is now carried on, will be immediately comprehended. This object is to uphold the privileged orders and keep the millions enslaved. Attack the Established Church, and the Bishops will instantaneously declare that its existence is necessary to "the best interests of society;" although seven-tenths of the whole population are anxious for the destruction of that very Established Church! It is quite clear, then, that when the Bishops talk of "society," they cannot possibly mean the community at large. Again, if the peerage be attacked, its defenders vociferate, "Thank God we have a House of Lords to save *society* from chaos!" Yet if the whole population were polled, ninety-nine out of every hundred persons would vote for the instantaneous annihilation of the House of Lords, as one of the best means of benefitting "society." Now, it is quite clear that the supporters of the peerage on the one hand, and its opponents on the other, must entertain very antagonistic views of what "society" really

means. Again, if the reform of the House of Commons be insisted upon, the Prime Minister declares that “society is satisfied to remain as it is.” But it is irrefutably certain that the millions of labourers, artisans and mechanics who have no rights at all, cannot possibly be contented with their state of serfdom;—and therefore it is evident that the “society” to which the Prime Minister alludes, does *not* comprehend the industrious classes. Again, if the manufacturers be implored to do justice to their slaves, either on the score of wages or with regard to the periods of labour, they answer that “society has gone on very well under the old system:” while, on the other hand, the operatives and their champions declare that “society is scandalised by the spectacle of unredressed wrongs.” Now, of a verity, the employers and the employed must be prepared to give widely opposite definitions of the term “society.” Again, if the toiling serfs and proletarians assemble together, in the belief that they at least possess the privilege of meeting to proclaim their wrongs and petition for their rights, the newspaper-organs of the upper and middle classes raise the cry that “society is in danger;” and in order to “save society,” the Duke of Wellington marshals his troops to bayonet and cannonade the people. But it is surely strange that “society” can be in danger, when it is the most honest and industrious portion of that very society itself which thus congregates to implore the House of Commons to do its duty. Ah! How convenient a word is “society” in the mouths of men who have monopolies to maintain and class-interests to defend!—how convenient a word to glide from the pen of a journalist who sells his talents to the cause of tyranny, coercion, and despotism!

When the Bishop, the Peer, the Minister, the Manufacturer, and the Capitalist speak of “society” as sanctioning the systems

on which they fatten, or as requiring all the defences which law, bayonets, and artillery can marshal around it, they mean that portion of the community which lives upon the labour of the rest. They mean that small section which revels in luxuries, at the expense of the millions of whose doom is penury and starvation. They mean the few indolent drones which devour the honey accumulated by the myriad industrious bees. In their estimation "society" comprehends the insolent Aristocracy, the bloated Church, the Officers of the Army and Navy, the Government and its officials, the placement and pensioners, the sinecurists and tax-eaters, the capitalists and the monopolists, the shopocracy and the moneyocracy, including the eight hundred and fifty-thousand electors who return the House of Commons. This is "society!" The millions are nothing: the overworked, half-starved, oppressed industrious classes constitute an immense nonentity. When the privileged orders speak, it is the voice of "society:" when the enslaved orders speak, "society" is menaced with anarchy! And yet the three tailors of Tooley Street were as fully justified in dubbing themselves the "people of England," as the privileged orders are in pretending to speak to the sentiments of "society."

Then again, with regard to Public Opinion, those privileged orders which I have enumerated proclaim *their* sentiments and arrogantly assume that it is the national voice which is speaking. "The people do not want reform," says Lord John Russell: he ought to say "the privileged orders do not want reform." A Bishop affirms, with canting air and droning voice, that "the people respect the Established Church:" the lawn-sleeved hypocrite should say, "those who fatten on the corruption of the Established Church are very zealous in maintaining it intact." The Admiral and the Colonel declare that

“public opinion is against any reduction in the Navy and Army.” they should say “the host of aristocratic offshoots who strut in red-coats or on the quarter-decks of vessels, will be sorry to lose their occupation.” The placeman, the sinecurist, and the pensioner affirms that “public opinion is averse to radical changes:” they should say, “we and all who live by legalised plunder and sanctioned robbery, would rather let things remain as they are.” In fact, those who are constantly invoking “public opinion” as the knock-you-down argument in favour of the systems which they support, are the bloated, lazy, indolent wretches who fatten on corruption and hope to be enabled to perpetuate the same scandalous abuses for the benefit of their children.

On the memorable occasion of the 10th of April, the hireling press was emphatic in its assertion that “public opinion” was opposed to the Chartist demonstration. What was meant by “public opinion?” The opinion of all those who are interested in maintaining everything that is corrupt in the institutions of this country. But those persons are in number as one to one hundred thousand, in comparison with the producers, the workers, and the toilers. Nevertheless, that same dishonest press—so domineering towards the masses, and so servile towards the upper classes—persists in regarding the interested few as “society” and their voice as “public opinion.” What a detestable mockery! What a scandalous outrage! But how can it be otherwise, so long as we have privileged orders—exclusive systems—peculiar interests—and class legislation? In England, a few individuals possess *everything*—the millions possess *nothing*. The former league together, dub themselves “society,” promulgate their one-sided sentiments with all the authority of “public opinion,” and thus ride rough-shod over

the enslaved masses. Nay, more—if these same enslaved masses raise their voices inconveniently loud, so far from being allowed to contribute their sentiments to make up the sum and aggregate of “public opinion,” they are scourged and persecuted by means of laws which affect to strike in the name of “society.” But the truth is, that such laws are mere engines of repression and coercion, wielded by the privileged orders: and as the privileged orders are the stronger party, having the army, navy, and constabulary forces on their side, they are enabled to tyrannise at will under the colour of “vindicating or defending society!”

What crimes, then, are committed in the name of “society!”—and what a mean-spirited, grovelling, despicable, tyrannical thing is “public opinion!” But why is society thus made to appear criminal?—and why is public opinion thus distorted into a lickspittle adhesion to despotism? Because the word “society” is used by an oligarchy to cloak its misdeeds; and the term “public opinion” is adopted as an excuse and justification for those misdeeds. The industrious millions belong not to that “society;” they are excluded from it—and are, indeed, its victims. Neither do their sentiments enter into the formation of that “public opinion”—for they are never consulted by their rulers, either directly or indirectly, and they have no representation in Parliament. They are the “hewers of wood and drawers of water” for task masters who do not thank them when they are patient and enduring, but who menace them with cannon and bayonets when they dare to become discontented—although it would perhaps puzzle the Attorney-General himself to tell how the miserable wretch can possibly be contented. But, if asked the question, the Government official would respond that it is no concern of his: all he has to

do is to take cognizance of discontent, without troubling himself as to the means of making men contented.

I have shown that the toiling millions are out of the pale of society; and that they have nothing to do with what is called public opinion. But let us see whether they cannot be brought within the scope of the former, and have their share of the latter. The aims can only be accomplished by carrying out the true meaning of the word *Society*, so as to make it “the union of the many in a common interest;” and the united sentiments of the majority will then constitute a true *Public Opinion*. But how is Society to become a fact, and not a mere name? By giving to the people—not to *some* of the people, but to *all* of the people—their natural rights and privileges: by treating them as human beings, and not as beasts of burthen or as mere machines; by establishing political equality, so that the voice of one man shall be as good as that of another in regulating the institutions affecting the lives, liberties, and property of all. From the exercise of the widest privileges, will spring the best social reforms; and if the masses be rendered prosperous, contented, and happy, the Attorney-General will have no necessity to engage the services of such miscreants as Powell, and the Duke of Wellington will not be compelled to marshal his troops and prepare his artillery to butcher the people.

If any portion of a community have a right to speak and act on behalf of “society,” to the exclusion of the rest, it should assuredly be the majority of the individuals forming that community. This majority would consist of the industrious classes; and their sentiments would, as a corollary, constitute “public opinion.” Viewing the case in such a light,—and it is merely turning the tables upon the oligarchy,—let us see what principles this veritable “public opinion” would enunciate. It

would set out by declaring that “the earth belongs first of all to those who are upon it, and that every one has a right to receive a subsistence therefrom before any individual should be allowed the enjoyment of luxuries.” It would maintain that “every man who works at any useful thing, has a right to be well fed and well clothed, before any individual who is able to find work should be permitted to eat the bread of idleness.” It would declare that “the community could only be held permanently together by the bond of a popular government, emanating from the whole society itself, and not from a mere fraction of the society; and that the laws should have for their object the welfare of the community at large, and not the aggrandizement of a favoured few.” And farther, that same public opinion—the opinion of the intelligent and honest masses of the community—would proclaim that “in order to render mankind in an eminent degree virtuous and happy, each individual must possess that just portion of distinction to which he is entitled by his personal merits: for man will never strive to be truly noble while wealth or the accident of birth is the fountain of honour; and the dissolution of this inequality is equally the interest of the oppressor and the oppressed—the former being delivered from the danger attendant upon tyranny, and the latter from the brutalisation of servitude.” In fine, it would be asserted by public opinion that if society were properly organized, and the true spirit of Christianity carried out in all our institutions, pauperism and crime would disappear, and all the members would live happily without care for the morrow, and in love and brotherhood. They would be enabled to cultivate every spot of ground that was habitable, in the manner most suitable to its nature. Knowledge would increase wonderfully by experiments made at leisure, and with

exactness, and would be freely communicated everywhere, and be regularly transmitted to posterity. An inconceivable progress would be made in discovering the laws of nature. There would be proportionable advances in all sorts of useful, ingenious, and agreeable arts. Every one might have the means of becoming a philosopher if he pleased. A happy emulation or love of glory, an insatiable curiosity, the love of truth, and an ardent thirst after knowledge, would render men more ingenious and more successful in making useful discoveries than either their presents wants and necessities, or their love of gain can possibly render them. Scarcely can anything be supposed so difficult to be discovered or effected, that it would not yield to the united efforts of mankind in such a favourable situation. In short, the whole earth would become a paradise, and mankind be universally wise and happy.

The Crowned Miscreants and Harlots of Europe

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It would appear that Kings and Queens are privileged beings in every sense of the word. They are not only surrounded by all the enjoyments, the luxuries, and the blandishments of this world: but they may indulge in murder, plunder, perjury, adultery, debauchery, and every other hideous crime or loathsome vice without losing the respect of their courtiers or the love of their admirers. They may perpetrate, or cause to be perpetrated (which is precisely the same thing) the most damnable deeds that ever disgraced humanity; and they still find sycophants to kneel at their feet and journalists to applaud their actions. Kings may become such monsters that even Satan himself must grow pale at their tremendous iniquities,—and Queens may outvie Messalina herself in the flagrant dissoluteness of their lives; but they proceed with impunity—being *above* the law, and *above* public opinion likewise.

If we want examples of wholesale murders and massacres perpetrated by the command of the Imperial or Royal Assassins, the history of the last three years will furnish us with plenty. First and foremost, there is the youthful miscreant the Emperor of Austria, who gave the bloody-minded Haynau a roving commission and *carte blanche* to hang, shoot, flay, and slaughter wherever he might think fit over the entire range of Hungarian territory. Gloating over the sanguinary vengeance which he thus wreaked upon the valiant Magyars the demon-hearted Emperor encouraged Haynau in his frightful career;

and the fiendish instincts of the General were not laggard in pandering to the imperial taste for gore. The young Emperor—a mere boy—expressed an anxiety to drink deep of Hungarian blood; and Haynau was not the man to suffer this predilection to go unappeased. In fact, it makes me shudder even at the bare idea of those atrocities which the Emperor of Austria could not only endure to contemplate, but actually loved to gloat upon. If ever there were a foul and atrocious murderer, then is the Emperor of Austria such a criminal; and, for my part, I consider Greenacre, Hocker, Rush, and Manning to be angels of light in comparison with the crowned fiend who made Haynau the accursed instrument of his hellish barbarities.

Next, we have the King of Naples, a man who revels in the blood of his subjects, and who thinks no more of shedding blood than of pouring out the sparkling champagne which flows so freely at his board. In General Filangieri he found as ready and willing an agent as the Austrian Emperor did in Haynau;—and the brave Sicilians can tell awful tales of cold-blooded murders and diabolical assassinations perpetrated by the hired bravos and by the express orders of the King of Naples. But this is not all the infamy which history has to chronicle in respect to the Neapolitan Bourbon. A darker and blacker crime—if there *can* be shades and degrees in such appalling turpitude as wholesale murder—lies at the miscreant's door: and that is the surrendering up of his capital to the pillage of the Lazzaroni, as a reward for the sanguinary services which they rendered him. Yes—the whole brutalized horde of professional mendicants was let loose upon the city of Naples, with leave and license to sack, ravish, plunder, burn, and murder beneath every roof where liberal opinions were known to be entertained; and my readers may be assured that

the Lazzaroni did not fail to carry out the royal intentions to the full extent of the license granted them. Is not this King of Naples, then, a murderer?—a foul, deliberate, accused murderer? Having convicted him of the highest crime which mortal can commit, it is scarcely worthwhile to pause even for an instant to bring home the lesser offence of perjury to this “august” and “illustrious” criminal. Nevertheless, his most Christian Majesty, the King of the Two Sicilies, has not only been most graciously pleased to imbrue his royal hands in the blood of thousands of his faithful and loving subjects; but he has now given the world a farther proof of his gracious condescension in the practice of crime, scoundrelism, and villainy of every denomination, by the foulest perjury that ever was committed. Yes, indeed—perjury the most diabolical that a man can possibly consummate! In 1848 this royal incarnation of Satan swore to observe the Constitution which was then established; he swore most solemnly—he swore “before God and the presence of Man”—he invoked heaven and earth to attest the vow which he thus made to respect and maintain that Constitution! A little more than two years have elapsed—and where is the Constitution now? It has disappeared: the royal liar, the crowned perjurer has annihilated it. O God! Why do thy thunders sleep? Why are thy lightnings still? Ananias and Sapphira were angels of truth and sincerity in comparison with the King of Naples.

Another example of the iniquity, combining murder and perjury, is furnished by the King of Prussia. This consummate scoundrel, after gloating from his palace window over the mowing down and cannonading of his people in the streets of Berlin,—and after having sworn to maintain half-a-dozen different Constitutions, and broken every oath thus solemnly

recorded,—dares to assert that he reigns “by the Grace of God.” If this were true, it would be to ascribe to the Deity those attributes which are usually supposed to belong to Satan: for assuredly hell alone could prompt the crimes of which the King of Prussia has been guilty. It was an impious mockery and a downright blasphemy on the part of the Ministerial Bulletin to speak of the merciful intervention of Providence in saving this monarch from death by the regicide hand of Sefaloge: for if the Almighty did ordain the failure of the attempt, it could only be in order that the King shall live on until the arrival of the grand day of retribution which Heaven has in store for the crowned miscreants of Continental Europe.

Of a verity, imperial and royal personages are for the most part a pretty set! I have shown my readers what the Emperor of Austria is—what the King of Naples is—what the King of Prussia is: I have proved them to be murderers and perjurers. But they are not the only crowned ruffians of whom ugly questions may be asked: for a bold querist may venture to inquire of the Emperor of Russia how many provinces he has depopulated—how many Jews has he caused to be expelled from their dwellings to perish in the snow—how many glorious Poles he has murdered in cold blood—how many political victims he has had flayed alive and lashed to death with the accursed knout,—in fine, how many human beings, including old men, women, and children, he has immolated to his vengeance, his ambition, or his bloody instincts? No wonder that Nicholas lives in constant dread of secret poison, and of the dagger wielded by some desperate or vindictive hand!

If we want royal examples of depravity, licentiousness, and profligacy, the annals of Europe will furnish them quite as readily as the foregoing instances of murder, perjury, and

barbarian cruelty. No great length of time has elapsed since a King of Bavaria was playing the fool and the debauchee with Lola Montes: and, to show what disgusting and depraved tastes the British Aristocracy possess, high-minded portraits of that notorious woman were sold innumerable at the West End print shops. Now, it is quite clear that the working classes did not purchase those pictures: it is equally certain that the middle-classes are too much engaged in their money-mongering, profit-making, wages-grinding pursuits to care a rush about the precious physiognomy of Lola Montes:— and therefore it is evident that her portrait must have sold exclusively among the Aristocracy. But, returning to the subject of royal profligacy, let me direct attention to the Court of Spain. There we find the bloated, drunken, gluttonous, depraved strumpet, the Queen Mother Christina,—a woman whose licentiousness ought to render her name a bye-word in the mouth of every mortal man and virtuous female. This lump of sensuality and grossness is the parent of a host of bastards, by a coarse-mannered, vulgar, uneducated fellow who was formerly a private soldier, and of whom she has made a Duke and a Grandee of Spain! Her daughter Isabella, the reigning Queen, has already proved well worthy of so delectable a mother. Serrano—the Marquis of Bedmar—and an actor whose name I forget, have opened the catalogue of royal favourites whose number will doubtless exceed that of the paramours of the infamous Catherine of Russia. No wonder that the King-Consort, the silly Francisco d’Assis—or, “poor Paquo,” as his estimable spouse contemptuously calls him—shrinks from the responsibility of adopting the expected “child of many fathers.” But what a moral example is all this for the Spanish nation!

In Portugal there is certainly a perjured Queen, if not an immoral one. The *Morning Post* declares that she is both: and I for one am not going to take up the cudgels in her defence. That is a wicked, wilful, impious oath-breaker, I will however boldly assert. Like the Kings of Naples and Prussia, she has violated her solemnly pledged vow to maintain the Constitution ; and she played the part of a fiendish tyrant towards the brave men who sought to enforce her adhesion to a promise backed by sacred oaths sworn in the sight of heaven!

Now, what do our readers think of the above-mentioned specimens of Royalty? Is it not a fact—that some of the principal thrones of Europe are occupied by blood-stained stained assassins, impious perjurers, and lascivious adulteresses? Of what use are laws against murder, when crowned murderers are permitted to go unpunished? Wherefore should society strike Hocker, Tawell, Rush, and the Mannings, and take no heed of the Kings of Naples and Prussia, and the Emperors of Austria and Russia? Or, indeed, how can we wonder that society should have its Hockers, its Tawells, and its Mannings, when it tolerates such hideous examples as those Kings and those Emperors? If God's law must be obeyed,—if there be really any sense or meaning in the divine dictum that 'whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed,'—how is it that the crowned murderers have escaped condign punishment? Has society no tribunal at the bar of which they can be arraigned? and cannot the public voice be raised loud enough to accuse them? The Aristocrat—the admirer of Royalty—the tax-eater of every description—and the whole horde of apologists for corrupt systems, will assert that when Kings put their subjects to death, it is for the crimes which these subjects commit against those Kings. But I declare most solemnly—most

emphatically—most deliberately, that this defence is the vilest possible attempt to excuse the blackest crimes. If Kings become tyrants, their subjects have no alternative but to rise up against them: and if those same Kings do not submit to the popular demand, they themselves provoke the collision which follows. If the people be defeated in that collision, their cause is not the less just, the less sacred, or the less holy: indeed, it becomes the more just, the more sacred, the more holy, in proportion as the tyranny which tramples it down increases its strength. Therefore, when the Kings who triumph by the unholy means over the holiest cause, seize upon the foremost champions of this oppressed and persecuted cause and put them to death,—then brutal, bloody, and unjustifiable murders are committed, and the Kings who authorise them are murderers.

It is true that the system which despotism and class-legislation have established in most countries, does not regard Kings as assassins in such cases: on the contrary, the system itself is the apparent justification of those gore-stained monarchs. But they are not the less murderers on that account. They may build up systems which are insulting to common sense; but common sense will yet take its own view of the deeds committed under the cloak of those systems. They may make a law by which Kings can do no wrong: but God will not be bound by such a blasphemous infringement—such a shockingly impious encroachment on His celestial prerogative. A horde of banditti may in general council resolve that “it is justifiable to rob;” but their assertion does not establish the justification in defiance of the law of God which says, “Thou shalt not steal.” Neither will any pretext of legislation or system justify Kings in the presence of the divine law which says, “Thou shalt do no murder!” The crowned demons of Russia,

Austria, Prussia, and Naples may find apologists, worshippers, admirers, and Defenders: but so will the thief find a friend in the man who receives the stolen goods. The aristocrats and placemen, the capitalists and the monopolists, the sinecurists, and the tax-eaters, who fatten upon the system which Kings prop up by wholesale murder, are not likely to quarrel with the means thus adopted to sustain that system. Nor is it wonderful if they should legalise those means and eulogise those murderers: 'tis so easy for class-legislators to enact a particular law—so easy for interested persons to put their conscience in their pockets and kiss the bloodstained hands of Kings!

The present age, is termed by Europeans an age of consummate civilisation. But how barbarous are the institutions under which these same civilised boasters are content to live! In Austria—in Prussia—in Italy, and elsewhere, a handful of oppressors can persecute, scourge, torture, assassinate, plunder, and pillage the millions to their hearts' content. These oppressors can set whole armies in motion, either to carry murder into the homes and desolation "into the fields of their native land—or to inflict the same upon the people of foreign climes. These oppressors can levy whatsoever taxes they choose, and impose them with as much partiality and unfairness as they like. In fine, every nation appears to have sold itself, body and soul, to a knot of aristocrats with a King at their head; and the natural consequences are corrupt institutions, class-legislation, the prosperity of the few, and the utter misery of the many.

The influence of Europe's royal murderers, perjurers, yoluptuaries, and adultresses, upon the morals of the nations must be most lamentably pernicious. The spectacle of the wholesale assassinations and the sanguinary deeds which the

crowned miscreants authorised or ordered in 1848 and 1849, was sufficient to produce the most brutalising effects, Those who apprehend “bloody democracies,” should endeavour to put down the examples of “bloody monarchies.” At all events, if such fiends as the Emperors and Kings to whom I have specially alluded, persist in holding themselves independent of the laws of God, it is probable that their subjects will some day vindicate those laws of the Supreme in preference to obeying any longer the antagonistic laws of Man. For the present system is too monstrous to continue. The starving wretch who murders in order to procure the means of obtaining bread, is duly tried, solemnly condemned, and pitilessly put to death: but the powerful monarch who orders his army to massacre ten thousand people demanding the rights of which *he* has robbed them, remains unpunished!

But who are the supporters of the system that allows so scandalous an anomaly? The Aristocracy and the Middle Classes. The Working Classes—the oppressed and persecuted proletarians—hate, loath, and detest the system. Though purposely kept in ignorance by vile despots and crafty churchmen, they are intelligent enough to perceive and comprehend all that is atrocious, inhuman, and diabolic in that system; and though having the examples of wholesale butchery before their eyes, they themselves are humane and merciful—too humane, and too merciful! Everywhere are the Working Classes more truly enlightened, more generous, more forbearing, and more noble-minded than the Aristocracy or the Middle Classes; and the union of these latter grades has been cemented for the purpose of perpetuating the slavery of the former. Thus all who live by hiring labour and making a profit of it, are leagued together against those who are forced to sell

their labour and who receive none of the profits thereof. Truly such a system, being utterly unnatural and preposterous, cannot be supported by natural and reasonable means; it is based on injustice, and can only be maintained by violence or coercion;—and in those countries where the people are most impatient under it, Kings will become murderers, perjurers, and anything else, no matter how black or how infamous, so long as their ferocity or their treachery can bolster up the system.

Lord Harrowby's Pugilism and Mr Henry's Law

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The Sixth Annual Meeting of the Society for Improving the Condition of the Labouring Classes was held at St. Martin's Hall, on Thursday, June 6th. The intention of the Society to hold this meeting was announced in the usual manner: advertisements were inserted in the daily newspapers, placards were posted on the walls, bills were exhibited in shop-windows, and numerous board-men paraded the streets in the vicinage of the place of assembly. Every possible means of publicity was resorted to; thereby proving that the Committee was anxious to obtain as large an audience as possible. The Hall was however thinly attended, and at no part of the proceedings was it more than half filled. The larger portion of the audience consisted of ladies; two-thirds of the male portion were the white-,¹ sanctified gentry; and the remaining third consisted of persons belonging to the working-class. But upon the platform, amongst the eighty or ninety individuals sprinkled about an amphitheatrical array of benches capable of accommodating at least five hundred. There were half-a-dozen Lords, three or four parsons, and the usual number of sleek and oily maw-worms who fatten upon every so-called religious or philanthropic society.

Soon after two o'clock Lord John Russell took the chair, As our report of the meeting stated in last Sunday's number of our

¹ The word that is hyphenated with 'white' is illegible.

journal, the proceedings commenced by “some reverend gentleman on the platform snuffling through a prayer or two,” during which that exceedingly pious “vessel” Lord Ashley buried his noble physiognomy in his hand and groaned out “Amen” with as sepulchral a lugubriousness of intonation as if the process of thanksgiving were in reality a solemn act of martyrdom or self-immolation. The prayers being ended, Lord John Russell made the usual appropriate speech for a chairman; and the Secretary droned through a windy and somniferous report, stuffed with statistics, when Lord Harrowby was called upon to propose the first Resolution. This he did with the characteristic display of aristocratic ignorance, arrogance, narrow-mindedness, and incompetency; he could not give utterance to ten consecutive words without hem’ing and haw’ing in a most exemplary manner—and yet he was by no means abashed at his own stupendous stolidity, nor did he sit down and give up the thing as a bad job when he found himself foundering amidst all kinds of ungrammatical twaddle, inconsequent verbiage, and vain attempts to connect ideas which would persist in remaining disjointed. It is true that the reporters for the daily newspapers made up for him a speech that read consecutively and glibly enough: but nothing could exceed the painful impression made upon the listeners by the excruciating style of its delivery. The only point at all intelligible in his speech was that in which the cloven foot peeped out: but in this instance the old proverb was verified, that “use is second nature.” I allude to the sentence in which Lord Harrowby tells the working-classes that they must not think of becoming land-holders— or in other words, that they must not dare to entertain the idea of encroaching upon the “vested rights” of the Aristocracy by disturbing this knot of

monopolists in the possession of the entire soil of Great Britain. Here Lord Harrowby was intelligible enough, because he spoke feelingly: he spoke, in fact, for himself and the class to which he belongs;—and as his aristocratic ideas have all his life been centered in the monopoly which he has so good a reason to advocate, it is not astonishing if he were enabled to express himself plainly and lucidly upon that one point at least. But even taking the tenor of his whole harangue, as he meant to deliver it, and as the reporters kindly shaped and modelled it for him, its meaning may be thus summed up :— Workingmen, this Society is doing all it can for you, and you must go down upon your knees and thank the disinterested noblemen and kind-hearted gentlemen who are taking so much trouble on your behalf. You must also express your gratitude to God that you have an Aristocracy which exhibits such a paternal kindness towards you. Remember that you have no real claim upon the upper classes who condescend to employ you and give you wages: and therefore whatever we do for you is from motives of pure philanthropy. Don't forget this—but be obedient, docile, submissive, and follow our advice in all things without venturing to have an opinion of your own. But above all, don't dream of becoming landowners: leave the land where it is—in the hands of the Aristocracy—because no good could possibly arise from your having anything to do with it, You see how deep an interest I take in your welfare, and what excellent counsel I am gratuitously bestowing upon you; and the only reward I ask, is that you shall continue to put faith in the honest, disinterested, humane, and intelligent class to which I, the Earl of Harrowby, belong.”

There cannot be the slightest doubt that those were the ideas which were uppermost in his lordship's mind when he

endeavoured to address the audience at St. Martin's Hall. He evidently takes the wonted aristocratic view of the relative position of his own privileged order and the working-class; namely, that the favoured few have a perfect right to revel in luxurious indolence, and that the millions are their natural serfs and slaves. But T will not dwell longer upon this point. Dismissing Lord Harrowby for the moment, I must proceed to state that so soon as he had finished his rigmarole by moving the first Resolution, the Rev. Mr. Champneys was called upon to second it. This gentleman delivered a short speech, in the course of which he made the astounding and horrifying admission that the poorer classes were in such a shocking state, it was a positive blessing for their children to be snatched away from them by death at the moment of their birth!

I was seated upon the platform when this awful declaration was made; and though knowing full well how painfully—how frightfully true it was, yet I could not help shuddering with horror when the idea was thus embodied in language. Only conceive the spectacle of a Christian minister being forced to stand up at a public meeting and proclaim such a tremendous fact! I do not for an Instant blame Mr. Champneys for his conduct: on the contrary, he exhibited much boldness and honesty in telling the truth so plainly. It is the system which causes the atrocity, that must be denounced,—and not the individual who in a dozen words summed up the whole iniquity of that system.

When Mr. Champneys sate down, I rose and requested permission to speak. I thought it an excellent opportunity to explain to the Prime-minister and the noblemen supporting him, what is the real condition of the working-classes, and what is the remedy they seek. I considered it to be an excellent

opportunity to convey the sentiments of the toiling millions to the Government and the Oligarchy—seeing that those millions cannot make their voice heard in the House of Commons, where they are utterly unrepresented. I should have spoken respectfully, but firmly: my language would have been courteous, but fully to the point; I should not have damaged the working-man's cause by intemperance, nor compromised it by timidity. The two classes were there, face to face—the Aristocracy and the Slaves of Toil,—there they were in the presence of each other! No better occasion—no opportunity more fitting for mutual explanations, could have been found: and I was anxious that inasmuch as the masses cannot obtain the attention of statesmen and lords in Parliament, they should endeavour to engage it at a public meeting.

In truth, I had foreseen this opportunity previously to the meeting: and I had not only procured a card of admission to the platform, but had likewise drawn up an Amendment embodying the salient points in the wrongs endured by the millions and the tyrannies inflicted, by the privileged few. But on rising and requesting to speak, I was instantaneously met by a demand from Lord Ashley whether I was a member of the Society. I answered that I was not, but would become so on the spot by the payment of a guinea. The Secretary, who was all sanctimonious blandness as he read his Report, was all fury and fame as he rejected my proffered donation. In fact, the object was to prevent me in any case from speaking: and though the working-classes present encouraged me in the most cheering manner, yet aristocratic tyranny prevailed in consequence of the numerical superiority of title worshippers and saints. But not contented with thus suppressing the right of free discussion, the leaders of the Society summoned the police; and Mr.

Merriman, the sub-editor of the *Weekly Tribune* newspaper, was taken into custody for cheering me. I then advanced towards Lord John Russell, and said, "My lord, I sincerely and earnestly hope that your, lordship will interfere to prevent this insult being flung in the teeth of the working-classes." It was then that Lord Harrowby sprang upon me with as much ferocity as if he were about to thrust one of his superannuated labourers into the workhouse;—and he committed the assault of which I subsequently complained before the magistrate. And now, having sketched the above proceedings, let me turn to the conduct of the magistrate, Mr. Henry, at Bow-Street. This gentleman held Mr. Merriman to bail on the same ground that he refused me a summons against the Earl of Harrowby for the assault: namely, "that the meeting was private, and not public—that persons not being members, though having admission-tickets, were only there-by courtesy—that the moment they attempted to take any part in the proceedings they became trespassers—and that being trespassers, any member of the Society had a right either to give them into the custody of the police or expel them by force." This is the manner in which Mr. Henry lays down the law: but I shall proceed to show that if his decision be in accordance with law it assuredly is repugnant to every notion of common sense and justice.

Mr. Henry says that the meeting was private, and not public: and he bases this opinion upon the fact that the audience were admitted by tickets, and that the advertisements in the newspapers described it as a "Meeting of the Society," and did, not say "A Public Meeting." But if it were a private meeting, why were the usual means of publicity adopted? If only the members were to be present, why were they not convened by circular?—for, on glancing over the list, I find that they are not

so numerous as to preclude such a method of convoking them. The newspaper advertisements, the placards on the walls, the window-bills, and the boardmen, constituted a much more expensive process than that of a few dozens of circulars, printed for a mere trifle and sent in envelopes at nine pence per 100. But the fact is that those advertisements, those placards, those window-bills and those boardmen, all tend to prove that the meeting was a public one. Those, in fact, were the means adopted to gather an audience together—to attract public notice—to fill the hall, if possible. It was a ticket-meeting, it is true: but anyone could obtain the admission-tickets. The advertisements themselves said so, and stated where the tickets were to be obtained.

The Anti-Corn-Law League used to admit to Covent Garden by means of tickets: and who will venture to say that their meetings were private? Will Mr. Henry assert that they were, and take his stand upon that ground? As for the averment that because an advertisement sets forth that a particular Society will hold a meeting on a certain day, such meeting is a private one on that account,—the notion is absurd. The formula is an established one adopted by all Societies. The National Charter Association announces that it will hold a meeting at John Street next Tuesday evening: who dreams that this meeting will be a private one, or that free discussion will not be permitted? Suppose Lord Harrowby comes upon the platform and requests to be heard—suppose that Mr. Reynolds catches him by the collar and pushes him rudely off—and suppose that Lord Harrowby goes next morning to the magistrate and applies for a summons against Mr. Reynolds? Well, the summons will be granted in a moment; and if Mr. Reynolds talks about a “private meeting” and points to the advertisement as a proof, the

magistrate will bid him desist from urging such nonsensical arguments. Nay, more—for merely laying a finger upon Lord Harrowby in the case supposed, Mr. Reynolds would be fined at least, 5*l*.

Now, it is quite clear that the Committee of the Society for Improving the Condition of the Labouring Classes, adopted all available means to fill St, Martin's Hall on the particular occasion referred to. The Committee did not for a moment rely only upon the Society's members to make up an audience: those members could be invited by circular—but the advertisements in the papers, the bills in the windows, the placards on the walls, and the boardmen in the streets, were meant to attract the public generally. Does not an assemblage thus constituted, become a miscellaneous meeting, and consequently a public one? If it were only a meeting of members, it would be private: but being miscellaneous, it is public. Now, then, is it reasonable—is it just—is it consistent with common sense to declare that at such a meeting, no discussion can possibly be raised upon a resolution put? Suppose that Lord Harrowby had moved a Resolution to the effect that “the working classes of these realms being highly delighted with the state of serfdom in which they are kept, this meeting deems it expedient that every employer shall henceforth compel each individual in his service to wear a dog collar:”—suppose, I say, that some Resolution of this nature, or one equally false in its premise and insulting in its sequence, had been proposed, was no working-man then present, or any representative of working-men, to be permitted to rise for the purpose of refuting the calumny and resenting the wrong?

But let us even suppose that the meeting was a private one—still those who had obtained tickets of admission had a full right

to be there; and if they had a right to be there, they had also the privilege of expressing approval or disapproval of the salient features in the proceedings. Suppose that Lord Harrowby had made so brilliant a speech that Mr. Merriman went into ecstasies of delight, and clapped and cheered most lustily—would he have been ordered into the custody of the police? Certainly not: he would have been permitted to applaud as much as he liked. But because he happened to applaud plain G. W. M. Reynolds, instead of the Right Honourable the Earl of Harrowby, he was accused of creating a disturbance. Cheer a lord, whether he talks sense or nonsense, and you can't do wrong—you must be in the right: but let this lord make ever so great an ass of himself, and if you hiss him you will be sure to get into a scrape. Lords are privileged to have hereditary titles and estates—privileged to have pensions bestowed upon them when they are poor—privileged to foist their younger sons upon the public purse—privileged to help themselves to all the loaves and fishes—privileged to toss the cheese-parings to the workers who make those loaves and catch those fishes for their pampered appetites—and privileged also to exact nothing but applause at public meetings!

Still granting for argument's sake that the meeting might have been a private one, I insist that Lord Harrowby committed an unjustifiable assault upon me, Mr. Henry ruled that if a non-member at a private meeting attempts to interfere with the proceedings, he becomes a trespasser and may be expelled by force. But I was not interfering with what must be understood to mean the business or proceedings of the meeting when Lord Harrowby assaulted me. My attempt to speak was an incident that had happened previously and was already disposed of. Lord John Russell had ruled that I was not entitled to speak:

and I had resumed my seat. That point, then, was over and done with. The outrage on Mr. Merriman constituted a second incident, and raised another point. My appeal to Lord John Russell not to allow that outrage to be consummated, had nothing to do with the business-proceedings of the meeting. It might as well be argued that if I saw two members suddenly jump up from their seats and begin to pummel each other, I had no right to obey a natural impulse and rush in to separate them. It was under a similar influence that I stood respectfully forward to appeal to Lord John Russell on Mr. Merriman's behalf, when I was attacked in so ferocious a manner. Now, was that a justifiable assault? or was it not? Even according to the mode in which Mr. Henry interprets the law of meetings: was I a trespasser at that moment? was I committing an act which made me a trespasser?—and if I were pot a trespasser, how can Mr. Henry justify his refusal of the summons for which I applied against Lord Harrowby?

But I shall not dwell any longer upon the matter. Both Lord Harrowby and his conduct would be beneath contempt, were not the former a type of a domineering class, and the latter a sample of aristocratic arrogance. In fact, the Privileged Orders think that they can ride rough-shod over the working-classes and their champions; and magistrates are willing enough to assist them in the exploit. Both Lord Ashley and Lord Harrowby knew that I should not hesitate to expose cant and treachery, humbug and tyranny; and they were therefore equally interested in silencing me at St. Martin's Hall.

To Sir Joshua Walmsley, M.P.

Original citation: George W.M. Reynolds, 'To Sir Joshua Walmsley, M.P.', *Reynolds's Weekly Newspaper*, 23 June 1850, 1.

Sir—In my capacity as one of the Members of the Council of the National Parliamentary and Financial Reform Association, of which you, sir, are the President, I consider it my duty to offer a few comments upon the motives that have led me to adopt a hostile attitude. Your Association “was founded about fifteen months ago; and the prospectuses, circulars, and addresses which were ‘issued at the time, were couched in terms apparently so straight-forward that they were well calculated to attract the notice of even ultra-reformers. There was an air of candour and sincerity, of solemn earnestness and of deep conviction, in the manner in which the initiative was taken by yourself and the other founders of the Association; and the fair inference was that the more intimately you became acquainted with the wrongs and the more completely you understood the rights of the working-classes, you would honestly recognize the necessity of widening your programme to the fullest extent demanded by reason and justice. Under these impressions I resolved upon giving you such humble support as my purse, my pen, and my oral advocacy might be able to afford; and I became a Member of the Council. In a private conversation which I had with you at the time, you stated that your own political principles went much further than those comprised in the programme of the Association; and from all I saw or heard of you, I was led to believe that you were a man whom the pressure of truth would easily move onward,

and whom no influences however potent could ever induce to become a reactionary. In fact I was impressed with the idea that you were a thoroughly well-meaning, strong-minded, conscientious man, —rapidly throwing off the prejudices of the class to which you belong—open to conviction—above mere truckling expediency—and possessed of a sound head and a good heart. My faith in your good intentions was therefore strong; and it was speedily confirmed altogether by an incident which I am about to recal to your memory. The first meeting held by the Association was at the London Tavern. On that occasion a speaker who did not belong to the Association, but who did not oppose it, complained that the “abolition of a property qualification” was not included in the programme; and at the very next meeting, held a few days afterwards at the Horns Tavern, Kennington, you boldly and fearlessly took upon yourself the responsibility of declaring that the important point alluded to should thenceforth be added to the other principles advocated by the Association. This step you took, I say, entirely upon your own responsibility and without having previously consulted the Council: but at the very next meeting of that body, a vote of indemnity was unanimously and cheerfully passed in respect to your proceeding. Not a dissentient voice was raised—not an objection was taken to the course which you had pursued: every one seemed to admire your courage and applaud your liberality; —and the impression made upon my mind was that both President and Council were following a *progressive* policy that entitled them to the confidence and claimed the support of the working-classes.

The first two meetings which the Association held, and the experience of the first two months of its existence, had thus taught the Council that it must widen the basis of its policy; and

the Council had readily and cheerfully yielded, in the manner just described. The natural inference was that yourself and the other gentlemen composing that Council would bend to every reasonable manifestation of popular opinion; and as the only measure of reform which can really benefit the working-classes is the People's Charter, I of course concluded that in due time your apparently progressive tendencies would lead you to the adoption of that glorious and faultless assemblage of principles. In these hopes was I strengthened by the conduct which you yourself were pursuing. At each successive meeting that you attended, you appeared to speak out more boldly and more plainly—until at last you positively avowed your faith in Chartist principles, and declared that in heart you were a Chartist. The members of the Association applauded, and the Council supported you; and it was therefore reasonable to believe that in proportion as you were inclined to go forward, they were prepared and determined to keep pace with you.

The Chartist agitation was revived; and its leaders were resolved to offer no obstruction to your movement. Many of them resolved to support you; while some, it is true, stood aloof. The two agitations progressed concurrently, without jostling each other, for a short time: but at last I began to perceive certain symptoms of a reactionary tendency in the proceedings of the Council of your Association. These signs first manifested themselves in a little incident which took place on the occasion of the second meeting at the London Tavern six months ago. About an hour previous to the commencement of the proceedings, I repaired to the Council Room and informed the gentlemen present that Mr. O'Connor proposed to attend the meeting; and I suggested the propriety of assigning to that gentleman a prominent part in the business of the day.

The manner in which my representations were received by several of the Members of the Council was anything but creditable to them: the cloven foot instantaneously peeped forth beneath the mantle of political expediency which those gentlemen had previously worn—and I saw in a moment that they were only wolves in sheep's clothing! But you, sir, acted well and nobly upon that occasion: you declared that Mr. O'Connor should have an opportunity of speaking, and that you would call upon him to support the First Resolution. In your capacity of chairman you kept your word; and I still therefore maintained my faith in your integrity, although my confidence in the leading Members of the Council (especially in those forming the Executive Committee) was utterly destroyed.

In due time came the assembling of provincial delegates at a Conference held in the Poultry. On that occasion an Address was proposed, the style of which was most arrogant in itself and most insulting to the working-classes. It represented your Association, sir, as the only body of men who had raised a voice in favour of reform since the passing of the mock-measure in 1832: it treated the great Chartist agitation with the most supreme contempt; —it spoke of rights as boons to be granted from one class to another; —and, in a word, it displayed an amount of narrow-mindedness, presumption, flippancy, and impertinence which made my blood boil. I denounced it in strong terms; and I procured the appointment of a committee to revise the document. The Conference assented to the alterations thus made: but. the incident had afforded me another proof of the disposition of the leading men of the Council to assume a domineering aspect and tyrannise over as well as insult the working-classes.

A few weeks passed, during which the reactionary tendencies of the Council were visibly becoming stronger and stronger. I therefore thought that the time was now come to put the Council to an open test, and ascertain who were the people's real friends and who were their secret enemies. I accordingly gave notice of two motions: the first to alter the programme so far as to render the suffrage dependent upon a "claim to be registered" instead of "a claim to be rated;" and the second, to add to that programme the principle of "paid representatives." The manner in which I was abused, assailed, and denounced on giving notice of these motions, fully proved how far distant were the sympathies of the great majority of the Council from the real interests of the proletarian classes; and I need scarcely remind you, sir, that the Council decided against even receiving that notice at all. Soon after this incident Mr. Le Blond moved that Mr. George Jacob Holyoake, a gentleman of undeniable talent, incorruptible patriotism, and unimpeachable character, should be elected a Member of the Council. I seconded the motion; and in a large assemblage of Members, Mr. Holyoake was blackballed—the mover and seconder alone voting in his favour! And yet the Council was constantly adding "great unknowns" to its list and had never previously rejected the name of any individual. But it was sufficient that Mr. Holyoake professed ultra doctrines to ensure his exclusion from a Council board where the mask was by this time thrown off and a stationary if not a reactionary policy was every day becoming more manifest. Following closely upon the heels of the incident just related, was the deplorable affair of the Conference held at Crosby Hall Chambers. It was originally intended—and indeed proclaimed by yourself, sir, at the London Tavern—that this Conference was to be composed of

delegates from the country and of all *members* who might choose to attend and take part in the deliberations. There was no mistake as to such being the original intention with regard to the Conference: all *members*— not merely Members of the Council—were to be entitled to attend. That the Constitution of the Association was to be a fair subject for discussion, and therefore open to revision, was likewise an admitted fact: inasmuch as letters had been on previous occasions sent by the Secretary of the Association to the branches in Scotland, promising that the “rate-paying clause” should undergo consideration at the Conference; and you, sir, gave a similar assurance to the miners’ deputation which waited upon you at Newcastle. Moreover, Mr. Tindal Atkinson, when Honorary Secretary, addressed a letter containing a similar statement to a body of reformers in the Borough of Finsbury. It is clear, then, that the Conference of April last was to consist of members generally as well as delegates, and also that the Constitution of the Association was to be liable to discussion and revision. But the moment it was known that I intended to renew at the Conference the two motions of which I had so vainly given notice at the Council-board, as above described, the Executive Committee suddenly altered the whole arrangements relative to that Conference then forthcoming. The members generally were excluded—the Constitution was not to be discussed—and a conservative majority was packed by issuing numerous invitations to persons who represented no local branches at all, but who were allowed to speak and vote the same as the duly elected delegates! Out of a hundred and eighty individuals forming the Conference, not less than fifty or sixty were thus present by invitation, and not by election. As a matter of course my Resolutions were scandalously, shamefully burked; and

instead of discussing the vital principles of a sound policy, the Conference deliberated upon nothing at all, but employed itself in listening to the middle-class doctrines and millocrat crotchets of Cobden and Bright, the short-coming principles of Hume, the inanities of Tillett, and the vulgar ungrammatical twaddle of a barrister named Parry.

With all the unfair arrangements and proceedings of the Conference, you, Sir Joshua Walmsley, were undoubtedly connected: and since that period you, too, have adopted a course which lays you open to the most grievous suspicions of evil intentions towards the democratic cause. Here is the fact; You never bestowed a farthing upon the National Charter Association, which comprises the intelligence and directs the mind of the working-classes of this country; but the moment two or three persons seceded from that movement and endeavoured to get up an opposition one of their own under the name of the National Charter League, you opened your purse to them, And wherefore? Because they had deluded you with the idea that there was actually a split amongst the Chartists, and you were anxious to encourage the seceders so as to weaken the democratic cause by sustaining the supposed division. Yet you must have observed by the reports in this journal that the National Charter League was a dead failure—that at every meeting which it has convened votes of censure have unanimously been passed upon the half-dozen persons connected with it— and that the Lectures which they so pompously announced at the Druid's Hall have been abandoned in consequence of the Lecturers having to speak to empty benches. You must have observed that of the half-dozen individuals engaged in trumping up that League, one is especially obnoxious to the working-classes; and yet this very

person did you select as a special object of your favour, creating for him a situation at two guineas per week.

When I brought the matter before the Council three weeks ago, you remember how I was treated. The Council-room resembled a bear-garden, and the most furious attacks were made upon me. The greatest excitement prevailed; and Mr. Arthur Wilkinson actually brought forward a motion to the effect that I should be expelled the Council! For what? Because, as a Member of that Council, I thought it right to express my dissatisfaction at the course which had been adopted in hiring the person above alluded to; and because I warned you of the consequences. I used no threats *then*. I did not tell you that I would instigate the working classes to any particular mode of action: I merely expressed it as my opinion that they would crush your Association; — and for this frankness it was proposed to expel me the Council!

You have been told, Sir Joshua, that there is a split amongst the Chartists. This is utterly untrue. Suppose half-a-dozen members of your Association were to secede and set up a Society of their own, —and suppose that this Society perished in a month from pure inanition, —would it be fair or correct to view such a beggarly incident in the important light of a split in your Association? Assuredly not; and by a parity of reasoning, there is no division in the Chartist ranks. Look at the progress of Chartism now; and look at the position of the National Chatter Association. Local councils and committees have been established all over the country: Conferences have been held during the last four months in London, Lancashire, and Scotland; — immense meetings are demonstrating the spirit of the cities and large towns: — excursions, tea meetings, and festivals are likewise adopted as a means of propagandism.

The working-class mind is moving; —and the confidence of the Chartists throughout the land has placed the Executive Committee to which I have the honour to belong, at the head of the movement. Do you doubt the influence of this Committee? do you despise its power? Misrepresentation may have blinded or prejudiced you on these points: but a little inquiry will soon put you in possession of the truth. The other day you said at the Council Board that ultra-opinions are not those of the majority of the working-classes: here again you have been misinformed. *Ultraism* means nothing more than the full measure of truth and justice, — “liberty, fraternity, and equality;”—and that full measure are the working-classes determined to have. The Charter is only regarded as a means to a great end. Be not deceived, therefore, relative to the sentiments of the masses: but rather open your eyes—make up your mind no longer to “see through a glass darkly”—and you will understand how puny, how contemptible, and how mean are the short-comings of your Association’s programme in comparison with the large wants and equally large resolves of the sons of toil. Above all things, do not treat the National Charter Association lightly: if you persevere in regarding it with disdain or defiance, it will demonstrate its power in a manner that must inevitably prove fatal to your Association. You have doubtless been told that it is not rich in funds: this is true—but its vast machinery is worked at a very small expense, and it obtains a revenue adequate to that pecuniary requirement. Remember that its power is not to be judged by its treasurer’s book, nor by the number of its enrolled members; but by the mass of mind that can move, and the myriads its Executive can collect together at will. The 10th of April showed you this: but if you still doubt, the Executive will have much pleasure in affording you an

opportunity of discussing the merits of your scheme in presence of half-a-million of men, provided that you pledge yourself to adopt the Charter if the show of hands be in its favour.

The Policy of the Upper Classes

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G.W.M. Reynolds, "The Policy of the Upper Classes,"

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Hume the historian prophesied that this country would in the course of the nineteenth-century become either a Republic or an Absolute Monarchy: and it is quite clear that every possible attempt is being made to realise the latter alternative. The rich are becoming richer; and the poor poorer: the consequence is that the aristocratic classes are increasing in influence, and the toiling millions are growing more dependent every day. In proportion as the arrogance of the favoured few augments, so does the serfdom if the proletarians become more galling and more fearful. The stern and uncompromising resolution of the upper classes to resist all the just demands of the people, has been clearly shown during the last two years. The national petition of April, 1848, was treated with scorn and ridicule by the Legislature; and every lordling, every aristocratic nominee, every placeman, every pensioner, and every advocate of class-interests deemed it glorious sport to pelt that petition with mire and trample it under foot. Then came the prosecutions so mercilessly, so rancorously instituted against the men who dared to proclaim the people's wrongs and assert the people's rights; and so determined were the upper classes (through the medium of their Government) to secure their victims, that even all affectation of decency and propriety was thrown aside and the diabolical agency of Powell was unhesitatingly called into requisition. Nor was this all: a complete system of persecution was got up against the people throughout the country. This

right of public meeting was boldly and arrogantly denied: the authorities threw off the mask and issued decrees, warnings, and proclamations against the assemblage of more than fifty persons in any one place. The newspapers frankly told the people that if that dared to meet, the military would mow them down: and in London the police-constables were armed with swords which were purposely jagged on one side, so as to inflict the most ghastly and dangerous wounds! No secret was made of these facts: the upper classes were prepared to outrage every law of humanity and incur every possible execration, rather than yield one jot to the demands of the slaves and serfs who implored the mercy of their task-masters. In fine, during the eight or ten weeks following the Kennington Common Demonstration, there was a perfect Reign of Terror in England. The gaols were filled with victims – myriads of spies inundated the country, provoking more “sedition” than they discovered – wives and children saw their natural protectors torn from them and thrust into dungeons – judges betrayed rampant partisanship upon the bench – the unpaid magistracy redoubled its grinding persecutions against the poor – and in fine, a signal proof was afforded to the whole world that a worse than Russian despotism can be put into operation in this country, at any moment and under colour of the laws.

At the same period the Irish subjects of her Majesty were favoured with a similar specimen of the power of the Oligarchy to tyrannise when it chooses, and of its readiness to avail itself of that power when its monstrous privileges appear to be at stake. The Suspension of the Habeas Corpus with regard to Ireland was voted by the House of Commons almost unanimously: and then began the Reign of Terror in the Emerald Island also. Neither with regard to England or Ireland

did the Government or the Legislature pause to ask what was the reason of the popular agitation, or whether that agitation was justifiable or not: but that Government and that Legislature found themselves strong enough to *strike*, instead of arguing—and they struck accordingly!

Twice since that period has the Oligarchy been asked and implored to make some small concessions to the people. In the session of 1849, and during the earlier part of the present one, were motions brought forward for an extended suffrage, for the vote by ballot, and for shorter parliaments: but a stern and resolute “No” was the answer to them all. “We are in possession of everything—lands, treasures, power, and government—and we will keep them by fair means or foul,” say the Oligarchy. Upon that assertion the drones take their stand; and the bees are not only defied, but compelled to toil—and toil—and toil—from morning to night just the same! The Legislature and the Government act with the fullest sense of security in their tyrannical course: they know that they are irresponsible for their misdeeds—they behold the army and the police at their backs—and they feel that they can either laugh at the toiling millions, or defy them—whichever they choose. Accordingly, if it be represented to the Legislature that the working-classes are ground down by the pressure and the iniquities of indirect taxation, the counter—appeal of the Chancellor of the Exchequer in favour of sinecurists and tax-eaters process successful; and the voice of the poor is drowned in the clamour of pensioners and placemen. If some philanthropic member moves for a committee to inquire into the condition of the labouring classes, the Government excuse that no benefit will result therefrom, is adopted with acclaim as the readiest means of stifling so inconvenient a proposal. And

when the question arises relative to the periods of labour in factories, the Government and the Legislature boldly and unhesitatingly oppose themselves to the earnest prayers and touching appeals that are made to them on the side of humanity; and the decision is given in favour of capital and monopoly against the wages-slavery and proletarian misery. In fine, the House of Commons is as bitterly, as sternly, and as bare-facedly opposed to the interests of the working-classes as the House of Lords naturally and necessarily must be; - and the unhappy millions, without representation and without rights, are utterly at the mercy of those who have monopolised all representation and usurped all rights!

It is the interest of the Aristocracy to maintain the power and splendour of the Crown; because the Crown is the talisman of their own privileges and prerogatives. Again, it is the interest of the middle-classes to league with the Aristocracy against the working-classes; and thus, all those who possess property are clearly and evidently banded together in maintaining the monarchical institutions of the country against any encroachment of the democratic spirit. But as the pressure of this spirit is influenced by Truth, and as Truth sometimes proves more potent even than armies, the united efforts of the aristocratic and middle-classes are now concentrated in upholding Monarchy as the acme of excellence, and crying down Republicanism as the vilest of systems. They are therefore pitting the one system against the other; and their newspaper organs are diligently employed in heaping filth upon every one or every thing connected with Republicanism. But do my readers suppose that the league of aristocrats and middle-classes will stop here? No such thing. They will adopt every possible means of strengthening the Monarchy in this

country; and the more the Monarchy is strengthened, the nearer to absolutism does it necessarily approach. Nor will the work of thus consolidating the royal power be done openly and avowedly: there are plenty of ways to accomplish the desired end without rendering it necessary to proclaim the object.

Indeed the process has been going on for some time past. It commenced soon after the French Revolution of 1848: it began on the eve of the Kennington-common meeting, when the newspaper organs of the upper and middle classes strove to persuade the country that the Chartists were aiming at the destruction of the throne, and when the walls were placarded with the piteous appeal contained in the words – “A lovely Queen and her infant Children!” after the meeting, a prayer was offered up in every church throughout the kingdom, thanking God for having preserved the country and the Queen from a bloody convulsion. What was the meaning of all this? Why, to impress upon the public mind all possible ideas favourable to Monarchy, and to hold up Democracy as something terrible and fatal as the Medusa’s head!

If we turn over the last two years’ files of those newspapers which represent the upper and middle-classes exclusively, we shall find that they have teemed with the most fulsome articles relative to the Royal Family of this country. The phrase of “our young, our lovely, our virtuous Queen,” has been repeated over and over again until the epithets really seem to become part and parcel of her official titles: while the most nauseating, the most extravagant, and the most outrageous adulation has been lavished upon her husband, Prince Albert. In fact, the hireling scribes of the press have been “writing upon Royalty” with might and main; and not an aristocrat or a middle-class man can make a speech upon any subject without lugging in something

about “loyalty.” The Government is of course lending a helping hand to these endeavours to “popularize” Monarchy; and one of its devices was to decree some months ago, at a Privy Council, that the Queen should henceforth be styled “her most *sacred*,” instead of “her most *gracious* Majesty.” Lord John Russell would not condescend to such ridiculous child’s-play as this was mere substitution of one fulsome epithet for another, were there not some special object to serve; and the aim was to throw off the solemnity of a religious halo around the Sovereign by the adoption of the word “sacred.” The same motive and the same design were at the bottom of the outcry raised against the omission of the words “*Dei Gratia*” (by the grace of God) from the two-shilling piece on which Prince Albert had the bad taste to bestow a foreign name: all the florins were called in, and the country was put to an enormous expense in order that an inscription, which some very good people consider blasphemous, should appear upon the new coinage!

These facts, trivial as they might appear to the superficial observer, or when viewed separately, are nevertheless all signs of the times. They indicate an anxiety, a straining, and a determination, to throw up as many defences as possible around the Monarchy; and these bulwarks are erected, not upon new legislative enactments, but upon the prejudices, the superstitions, and the weaknesses of the human mind. Everything is done, in fact, to invest the Sovereign with that kind of *prestige* which used to be peculiar to Spanish Kings and Queens; – and England is to be made the monarchical nation *par excellence*! As a matter of course the “splendour” – that is to say, the extravagance – of the Court is to receive due encouragement and support – in being well known that pomp, parade, and ostentation exercise a vast influence upon ordinary

minds. The reader may hence understand how it is that such vast sums have been so readily voted to enlarge and improve Buckingham Palace,—how such an unconscionable outlay has been permitted with regard to the yacht, and other royal whims and fancies, - how a startling amount is on the point of being wasted upon the marble arch in front of the regal dwelling,—and how some hundreds of thousands are to be next expended in altering St. James’s Park, so as to suit the whimsical caprices of Royalty. It is likewise contemplated to increase Prince Albert’s allowance from 30,000*l.* to 50,000*l.* a year, in addition to his other sources of income; so that his other sources of income; so that his annual revenue will amount to nearly 70,000*l.*: and this measure will be followed up by carrying into effect the Queen’s darling project – namely, the bestowal of the title of “King Consort” upon her husband, so that he may be addressed as “Sire” and “Majesty” instead of “your Royal Highness.” These titular alterations would be beneath contempt on the part of the thinking portion of the community – were it not that they are proofs of those reactionary and absolute tendencies of which I have been speaking.

Yes – every circumstance proves that an endeavour is now in progress to realise one portion of Hume the historian’s prediction. The Aristocracy trembles as it looks forward, and casts a revered and adoring gaze at the “good old times! Of its ancestors, when tyranny had no fears and ruffianism enjoyed the most perfect security. “To allow things to remain as they are, is in reality to afford an opportunity for the progress of freedom,” say the privileged orders to themselves: “we cannot therefore remain stationary – and *we*, of course, cannot go onward!” What, then, must we do? Our position is desperate: and the only help for us is to adopt a thoroughly reactionary

policy. We must restore the system of those good old times on which our retrospection lingers so fondly: we must establish an absolute monarchy as the only barrier that can possibly be raised against the coming tide of democracy. But we must work quietly, insidiously, and cautiously, - careful how we shock the minds of semi-liberals, or goad the ultras to desperation!”

Such has been reasoning of the privileged orders – and such is the policy which they are adopting. The Ministers and the House of Commons are the tools and instruments of the Aristocracy, and cannot help being used as such in this reactionary aim as well as in any other. In addition to the proofs which I have already brought forward of these absolutist tendencies, I will hastily sum up a few details of the atrocious workings of the policy itself. First, there was the quarrel trumped up with France, in order to divert the French mind as much as possible from the passing of the Suffrage Strangulation Bill; and now that the measure has become law, the diplomatic differences are found to be wondrously easy of settlement. Secondly, there is the wholesale assault made upon the Sunday newspapers, under the guise of a Sabbatarian question: for the enemies of liberty know full well that Sunday is the working man’s leisure day to read his journal, and they are anxious to deprive him of those means of self – instruction. Thirdly, there is the vile and scandalous endeavour now making to compel the Polish refugees to emigrate to America, by withdrawing from them all means of support in this country; so that the heroes who are ever ready to fight in Liberty’s cause, may be removed far away from the vicinage of that European Continent where the proletarians will have yet to wade through oceans of blood to achieve their emancipation.

Other proofs of the reactionary policy, as well as of the absolutist tendencies, of the upper classes in this country might be easily adduced: but as I must shortly return to this subject, I shall reserve further explanations and comments until the next occasion.

The Proletarian's Career, from the Cradle to the Grave

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Sad and mournful is the history of the proletarian race! The child of the working man is born either in a wretched hovel or a miserable garret; and the first effusion of parental joy which welcomes the infant's presence in this world, is suddenly damped by the fearful conviction that its destiny will perhaps involve the same privations, sorrows, and woes which its father and mother have already known. Yes—and too true is this presentiment: too painfully accurate is this gloomy forecasting! In the very first hours of its birth the infant becomes surrounded by circumstances which prove to its unhappy father and weeping mother that it is one too many in this world. There is no place for it—no room for even its tiny being. The father's wages are not increased because he has this additional claim upon his resources: society does not seem to consider that an extra loaf, an extra bed, and extra necessities should enter the hovel or the attic where another member is added to the community. Perhaps the infant has been ushered into the world under the care of the parochial authorities; —and thus is the Cain-brand of pauperism upon it from its very birth! Or may be it was born upon the door step of a workhouse into which the wretched mother was refused admittance: for these things are of frequent occurrence in this land where the saints collect a million sterling every year at Exeter Hall, and where the

Established Church enjoys a revenue of ten or twelve times that amount.

But whatever be the circumstances of the proletarian infant's birth, its entrance into life is marked by misery and woe. Society virtually repudiates it as an intruder; and its parents weep over it as they shudder at the career to which they know that the child is fore-doomed. Its sorrows commence in the cradle, and are only a foretaste of those which must be experienced during its passage through life, unto the boundary of the grave. Neglect, want, and privation are the companions of its infancy. If its parents belong to the class of agricultural serfs, the babe is necessarily entrusted to a little sister or a neighbour's daughter—in either case, a girl of tender years—while the mother is compelled to weed in the fields. As a matter of course the poor babe receives many severe falls and serious hurts from the carelessness of its little nurse: and in numerous cases it is made the victim of downright ill-treatment and all the cruelty of girlish spite. Nor does the infant fare better if its parents belong to the class that work in factories: the mother can barely find time to give it the breast—and when the bell rings, she must toss it to some child too young to take proper care of it, or to some old woman who pours poisonous opiates down its throat to silence its wail. Thus is the infancy of the proletarian characterised by dangers, by sufferings, by cruelties, and by neglect which it is a wonder if the child survives, but no portion of which may be justly charged against the parents—for *they*, poor creatures! are themselves the victims of circumstances, and all their actions are ruled by a stern compulsion. In a word, *they* must toil for their taskmasters—or else consent to starve!

The childhood of the English slave is a natural sequence of so deplorable an infancy. In the rural districts the little urchin rolls about on dung-heaps, where it devours the pieces of raw carrots and turnip-parings that may have been thrown there; and in the cities and towns the child is turned out to play in the streets, where its famished condition prompts it to rake the gutters and the dust-heaps for any offal, decaying vegetables, or putrefying meat that may be thrown forth from the dwellings. It is precisely the same with the little daughters as with the little sons of the enslaved classes.

The boyhood and girlhood of proletarian children— say, from the age of six or seven to that of twelve or thirteen—must be contemplated with mingled sorrow and indignation by all whose feelings are not blunted by the purse-pride of the middle-classes or the utter selfishness of the aristocracy. Brought up in poverty and ignorance—surrounded with every evil influence, and having no opportunity to contemplate anything humanising for the mind or elevating for the feelings—how can it be wondered at if the working-man's sons should become corrupted by young thieves, and his daughters contaminated by juvenile prostitutes? “But there are the National Schools and the Ragged Schools!” exclaims some maudlin saint or smooth-faced hypocrite, like Lord Ashley. True: but the working man may be independent enough, despite of the degradation and serfdom in which the heartless ones of your class, Lord Ashley, have plunged him, —he may be independent enough, I say, to determine that *his* children shall *not* be reared in sectarian schools which teach only the vilest bigotry and the most detestable servility. Or again, there may be no schools of any kind whatsoever in many localities where the working-men and their families throng as bees in a hive; —and as for the rural

districts, there is scarcely a cottage which is within half a-dozen miles of a school.

But even if the whole country were plentifully dotted with establishments for educational purposes, the beneficial results would be insignificant so long as the fiend PAUPERISM remains dominant in the land. The poor boy and the poor girl, though able to read and write, would still be exposed to all the temptations and all the horrors of that precarious existence which is the doom of the wages-slaves in this country. The elements of education would not spare them the ills of hunger and thirst, rags and homelessness; —and if they were able to read the Bible, the parable of the unjust steward would teach them to have recourse to any dishonesty rather than starve outright.

The boyhood and girlhood of English proletarians is therefore passed in a manner utterly incompatible with morality and the inculcation of sound principles. As the unfortunate beings grow up into the vigour of youth and thence merge into the condition of young men and young women, the stern realities of life increase around them, and naturally develop new temptations. When we know that all the members of a poor family are too often huddled together in one small room, the grown-up brothers and sisters sleeping together,—or worse than even this, when we are aware that in the vile lodging-houses persons of all characters and both sexes herd together, the victims of dire poverty being made as it were the bed-fellows of the most hardened villains and shameless strumpets,—how can we be surprised if all the purity of those who wish to remain pure, and all the virtue of those who yearn to remain virtuous should be rapidly undermined and eventually subdued? The rapidly undermined and eventually

subdued? The Queen's children could not resist the pressure of such tremendous influences: the proudest lordling would become a rogue, and the most highly accomplished daughter of the aristocracy would be contaminated, in the midst of such horrible circumstances.

Well, then, we find the young man and the young woman of the proletarian grade passing on, by a natural process, and beneath the tyranny of an inflexible necessity, from misery to vice—and from vice to consummate depravity. But even supposing that their better principles survive temptation, and that the young man retains his honesty and the young woman her chastity until the time when they may be said to commence the grand struggle which Labour has to maintain against Capital—the battle of Starvation against Opulence—the contest of Industry against pampered Indolence: what, then are the prospects—what is the career of the proletarians? If they can obtain employment, they must work from morning to night for the smallest pittance; and when the labour-market is overstocked and they are turned adrift, they must go to the workhouse, if the workhouse will receive them. And if not? They must perish of starvation—or end their misery by suicide. If they dare to beg, away with them to, prison as rogues and vagabonds! The mere fact of their penury constitutes the ground of the persecution which they must expect to endure. In the cities and towns the Police Laws enable the myrmidons of justice to hunt them down: in the open country they are everywhere encountered by sign-boards announcing that “vagrants will be prosecuted.” If the famishing father of a starving family catches a hare on the grounds of a Duke worth a hundred thousand a-year, the miserable wretch is sent to prison as a felon. If the poor mother sets up an apple-stall in the

street, she is driven away by the police. If the whole family beg eastward of Temple-bar, they are taken before the Lord Mayor who warns them not to be found in the City again: and if they implore alms westward of Temple bar, the magistrate tells them that they have no business in Westminster. The unfortunates! they have no business in this World at all: —their mendicancy offends the eyes, of the wealthy—the spectacle of their rags is a nuisance to the delicate ladies riding in their carriages! What, then, must, be done with the proletarians who cannot obtain work? Let them go to the Union bastille as degraded, paupers— and when they come out, send them to prison as rogues and vagabonds: then, on emerging from gaol, hunt them through the country from workhouse to workhouse, under pretext of finding them a parish-settlement somewhere or another; —and at length goad them into the commission of some crime which shall afford a “learned and merciful judge” an opportunity of telling them that they had better leave the country (*i.e.* be transported as felons), as they cannot possibly hope to do any good *here*. And perhaps the same upright judge will kindly and considerately assure them that they *may* retrieve their characters in another clime!

These are some of the ways of dealing with the unemployed proletarians: but there are others which the refined and exquisite humanity of the taskmasters has invented. For instance, the poor friendless needlewomen may be *transported* in shoals under the less shocking, form of *emigration*. Or else let the proletarians be killed outright and in vast multitudes by means of evictions and by the consequent process of starvation, as is the case in Ireland.

But what is the usual close of the proletarian’s career? When exhausted by a life of crushing toil and manifold

privations, he feels the advance of a premature old age, what prospect awaits him? Will his taskmasters pension him for the remainder of his days? Will they assign to him a neat cottage as his dwelling, and relieve his heart of all care relative to the necessities and comforts of existence? Not they! —not a single shilling of the colossal wealth which *his* labour has helped to pile up for *them*—no, not a shilling will they bestow upon their worn-out slave! “Do we not pay poor rates?” will the taskmasters exclaim, with surprise and indignation, if the wretched proletarian should venture to appeal to them for succour. And therefore must the proletarian die in the workhouse or on the dung-hill—his taskmasters care not which!

Mr. Russell, the talented author of a book which has been frequently alluded to in the notices to correspondents, draws so forcible a picture of the present state of social vitiation, that I cannot do better than quote it as an addendum to my own observations on proletarian misery. He says, “Almost all the worst vices, the most unprincipled acts, and the darkest passions of the human mind, are bred out of poverty and distress. The primary springs are poverty, ignorance, and a demoralizing course of prison discipline. On the first point it may be sufficient to state that at the present moment the most moderate computation shows that one-fifteenth. part of the adult female population is subsisting by the lowest and most degrading prostitution. One-fifteenth of the whole population have no means of living but by robbery, swindling, pick-pocketing, and every species of crime; one-third of the people are what are denominated poor, living from hand to mouth, and daily reduced to the most heartless beggary. In proportion as a people become not only well instructed, but comfortable, in

such ratio will they become free from crime, and, morally speaking, innocent. The acquisition of the comforts of life is not merely necessary for their enjoyment, but because without them society must remain in a state of absolute barbarism. This may be easily demonstrated. Where the mind is constantly occupied in providing for the immediate wants of the body, no leisure remains for its culture—the intellectual part of our nature is neglected in the all-engrossing care of providing for its natural wants. The people are mere hewers of wood and drawers of water; and their views, sentiments, and feelings become consequently contracted, selfish and sordid. Without the tranquillity, leisure, and elegancies of life afforded by a community of property and services, whose speculative and elegant studies which expand our views, purify our taste, and raise us higher in the scale of being, can never be successfully prosecuted. What can the clergy mean by upholding such a soul-murdering system as this? A mass of people whose whole existence is engrossed by bodily labour, necessarily lives under the predominance of faculties which cannot produce the Christian character. The true practical Christian possesses a vigorous and enlightened intellect, and moral affections glowing with gratitude to God and love to man; but how can the people at large be enabled to realize this condition of mind, if stimulus for the intellect and the noble sentiments be totally excluded by the daily routine of their occupations? Whatever men are taught highly to respect gradually acquires the rank of a virtue; well therefore has it been said by a master of philosophy, that the honours of a State direct the esteem of a people; and that according to the esteem of a people is the general direction of mental energy and genius. The

consequence of affixing the highest worldly rewards to wealth is, that to be rich is accounted a merit, and to be poor an offence. Nor is the worst: a false standard of morality is thus created, by which it is made of less consequence to be wise and: virtuous than to be rich. How constantly are individuals and families pronounced *respectable*, the favourite pass-word into society, when, if reference were had to their character, to anything but their wealth, they would be entitled to anything but respect. *What* is commonly understood by *good society*? Certainly the exclusion of nothing bad but poverty: it may exclude every one of the virtues, provided there be a sufficiency of wealth.”

How immense are the abuses which render our social system abhorrent to the humane man and terrible to the thoughtful one! —how undeserved are the honours, the luxuries, and the blessings which the favoured few enjoy—and how tremendous are the woes, the wrongs, and the cruelties which the millions endure! But what is to be the end of all this? No maudlin mock philanthropic Societies will alleviate the evils with which the poor man groans: no peddling, puny, milk-and-water measures of reform will reach the hideous gangrene which is devouring the heart's core of society. One wholesale annihilation of abuses on the one hand, and one unlimited acknowledgment of rights on the other, can alone save this country from chaos—from anarchy— from ruin. The People's Charter, as the means towards the reconstruction of the social system, is the only panacea—the only remedy. Any measure of reform which omits one single point of that Charter, will be valueless to the masses. Universal suffrage, without the principle of “Payment of Members,” would be a delusion, a mockery, and a snare. The middle-class reformers know full well that such is the fact—the incontrovertible, irrefragable

fact; —and therefore they shrink in dismay from the bare idea of admitting a principle the tendency of which would be to give LABOUR its representatives. No - the Rights of Labour will never be recognised by middle-class reformers: all their thoughts, all their interests, and all their cares are centred in what they call the Rights of Capital. And while Capital is positively increasing its privileges by augmenting its accumulations and strengthening its concentrations, Labour is necessarily depreciating in value. The more potent Capital becomes, the more must Wages diminish. And this antithetical process is constantly going on. The Capitalist is struggling day and night to increase his capital. But whence must the increase come? From the diminution of wages? Suppose that 100 millions are employed as capital sunk in commercial enterprises, and 100 millions are likewise employed throughout the year in the payment of wages: if the capitalists, in their unwearied endeavours to increase their fortunes, succeed in augmenting the aggregate capital to one hundred and five millions, then the *five* millions are taken from the Wages, the aggregate of which consequently falls in the course of the year to 95 millions. Thus all increase of capital is obtained by an encroachment upon wages; — and as capital *does* augment year after year, so do wages diminish in proportion. Hence it is clear that the condition of that smaller portion of the community which lives upon the labour of the rest, is rapidly improving; while the larger portion whose labour is thus lived upon, are falling lower and lower into the slough of proletarian misery.

The Aristocrat's Career from the Cradle to the Grave

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The infant scion of the Aristocracy is ushered into this world amidst all the delicate attentions and most tender precautions that the lavish outlay of gold can ensure or the skill and ingenuity of man can possibly devise. Such is the boundless profligacy existing in the upper classes that the babe is more likely to be indebted for its existence to the footman or to the friend of its reputed sire, than to this reputed sire himself. Nevertheless, the moment it is displayed in the nurse's arms to a host of admiring relatives, a wonderful likeness to "its pa" is discovered by all present. And this is not, after all, so very remarkable; inasmuch as through the whole range of the male members of the titled Aristocracy of this blessed country, there is not one countenance out of a dozen that possesses any claim to intellectuality. The dull, inane, vacant look of the child therefore justifies the discovery so promptly made at its birth relative to its striking resemblance to its real or putative father, whose unmeaning face expands into smiles at the compliments thus paid him by sycophant relations and lick-spittle friends. As a matter of course, the high-born "mamma" cannot think of performing that duty which is most pleasing to mothers who are not brought up amidst the taint and contamination of fashionable life; and although perhaps bounteously supplied by nature with the proper nutriment for her babe, the heartless lady abandons it to the care of a wet-nurse.

The bells of the village-church on the family estate are rung to welcome the birth of the infant lordling; and the poor deluded peasantry, rendered grovelling and servile by the base condition of serfdom in which the modern feudal system binds them, are readily bribed by beef and beer to testify their joy at the certainty of the perpetuation of their taskmaster's race. In due time the infant is christened with half a – dozen sounding names: a bloated Bishop, wallowing in that luxury which Christ preached against and which Luther denounced, performs the baptismal service; - and a couple of peers, together with some noble lady, all of whom have misdeeds and failings enough of their own to answer for, become responsible for any sins which their godson may hereafter commit, and into which a vicious education is certain to plunge him as he grows up.

In his childhood he has a private tutor who “bends the twig when it is young” with a vengeance. That is to say, the preceptor – who is most likely a clergyman – instils into his pupil's mind from the very first the most pernicious notions relative to the child's station in society. The brat is taught to learn to “play the lord” from his very cradle – to believe that he was born only to be petted, pampered, and waited upon – to look down upon the domestics as slaves and the common people as hereditary bondsmen and bondswomen. He is reared with an inveterate hatred to everything that is “vulgar:” that is to say, he is taught to despise, and almost to hate, the horny-handed peasants who rear the crops on his father's estates, the pale-faced mechanics who produce elegancies of life for the enjoyment of the favoured bantling, and the whole of that industrial class upon whose vitals he fastens like a leech from his very birth. He is thus nurtured in arrogance and self-conceit – trained to consider himself a demigod- brought up to inflict

the effects of these atrocious principles upon all who are unfortunate enough to come within the sphere of his influence.

His boyhood is most likely passed at a public school – such as Rugby, Harrow, or Eton; where he is favoured by the masters because he is “a lord,” and allowed to bully all the untitled boys according to his own good will and pleasure, - they not daring to retaliate in any shape or way. He thus imbibes the art of tyrannizing with impunity; and his cowardly, savage instincts are developed and allowed full license in preparation for the time when they may vent their rage upon the people at large. Although most likely the veriest dunce in the school where he thus passes his boyhood, he is permitted by the truckling masters to carry off the prizes; and during the holidays he is paraded by his vail, silly, frivolous mother and his arrogant, self-sufficient blockhead of a father as “a prodigy of intelligence.”

On leaving school, the young aristocrat either goes to the Royal Military College at Sandhurst to prepare for the army; or else to one of the Universities to “finish his education.” If at the former, he is sure *not* to obtain his commission by the regular process of study and by passing the prescribed number of examinations: his ignorance and his idleness are too flagrant to admit the possibility of the Professors, lick-spittle though they be, so far outraging all decency as to send him before even such a sleepy drowsy set as the Commissioners presiding at those examinations. He therefore has his commission as a cornet or ensign in some “crack regiment” given him by the Commander-in-Chief; while the humble untitled student, who has gone honourable through all the courses of study, is sent into one of the worst regiments in the service and most probably stationed in India.

But if the young aristocrat be sent to the University to “finish his education,” heaven knows that he *does* finish it most delectably by becoming deeply initiated in all the mysteries of gaming, card-playing, steeplechasing, betting, drinking, lying, swearing, cheating, and seducing. He therefore leaves the University completely imbued with all aristocratic vices – treating morality as a mockery, making a pastime of seductions, and steeped to the lips in debaucheries and profligacies of all kinds. He is now a man and plunges into all the dissipation of London life. He frequents the “hells” of St. James’s – kicks up rows at cider-cellars – and winds up his night-sports by wrenching off knockers and getting himself locked up in the station – house. Next morning he gives a feigned name when placed before the magistrate; and his conduct has been so outrageous that “his worship” orders him to be committed for seven days to the treadmill. But the young aristocrat proclaims his rank – whereupon “his worship” instantaneously discovers mitigating circumstances in *his* peculiar case, and considers that the ends of justice will be answered by fining “his lordship” five shillings, with leave to speak privately to the policeman whose head he has broken. Sometimes the young aristocrat varies his pastime by thrashing a constable within an inch of his life, or giving a poor wretch in a public-house a guinea to drink a pint of brandy at a draught, a feat which kills the aforesaid poor wretch upon the spot; but somehow or another these little matters are always hushed up in a very pleasant and comfortable fashion indeed, magistrates being wonderfully lenient and accommodating where aristocratic peccadilloes are concerned.

The young hero of these adventures is likewise a great patron of prize-fighters, horse-chaunters, and black-legs; - and

he neither hesitates to swindle upon the turf or cheat at cards or dice. Indeed, to be able to “turn up a trump” or “secure a die” are amongst his most indispensable accomplishments. He is a large purchaser of indecent pictures from France, and encourages the most licentious ballet-dancing at the Opera. His purse sustains the fashionable brothels at the West End; and old procuresses find constant employment at his hands. No man’s wife or daughter is safe from his overtures; and he carries desolation into countless families. But he laughs at the broken-hearts of his female victims, and treats the most cold-blooded seduction as the primest of larks. The ranks of the frail sisterhood of London are swollen by the confiding girls whom he debauches and abandons; and the House of Lords would have to take cognizance of few divorce bills, were it not for him.

The instincts for cruelty which were so much encouraged when he was a boy, are now sharpened by the sports of his manhood. He takes to cock-fighting, badger-baiting, and otter-hunting; and he indulges in those execrable specimens of refined cruelty – those atrocious displays of a cold-blooded heartlessness – denominated *battues*.

Having thus passed through the invariable course of training, our young aristocrat is considered efficient to represent the people in the Commons House of Parliament, - that is to say, to represent the servile class of shopocrats who will consent to return such a rascalion. He accordingly enters the Legislative Assembly, where he votes against Sunday – trading, and in favour of Sabbath coercion: he likewise becomes a bitter opponent to every measure at all calculated to benefit the masses, whom he only knows as “the mob,” “the unwashed,” “the rabble,” and “the scum of society.” He gets

pensions and places for all his poor relations, and looks upon the British Constitution (which affords scope for such enormities) as the finest monument of human wisdom. It would be very odd if he thought otherwise!

In course of time his father dies, and he succeeds to the family title and estates. The Upper House now becomes the sphere of his “usefulness,” which he manifests by an increased hatred against the masses and a more stubborn opposition to the popular cause. He gets an appointment perhaps in the Royal Household, and cries up “loyalty” as one of the cardinal virtues. Or else his vanity prompts him to demand an embassy at some foreign Court – a request which the Minister dares not refuse. The newspapers announce the appointment with infinite delight, the important discovery being immediately made that “his lordship possesses all the eminent qualifications requisite for the distinguished post which at the command of his Sovereign he has undertaken to fulfil.” He carries his tremendous arrogance, his pomposity, and his pride to a foreign country, and renders the very name of an Englishman hateful or else contemptible wherever he goes. When in his dotage he returns to England and resumes his seat in the Upper House, where he is considered a mirror of consistency because he has all his life maintained an uncompromising war against everything useful, progressive, humanizing, and truly Christian; - and when the daily newspapers contemplate his acts and record his votes, they go into ecstasies, exclaiming, “Thank God, we have a House of Lords!”

Having all his life slept upon down, trodden upon velvet, eaten upon golden dishes, and revelled in the varied luxuries and elegancies which the toils of the famished proletarians have produced, the aristocrat dies at last in the arms of a family

whom he has reared by the light of his own precious example. As a bloated Bishop attended him at his birth, so does another pampered prelate minister at his death-bed; and the one mummer is as detestable as the other. The bells that rang cheerily to welcome his appearance in the world, are now tolled with muffled gloom in the same spirit of miserable servility; and the newspapers which joyously announced “the birth of an heir to one of the noblest houses in the kingdom,” go into mourning for “the venerable peer whose decease will be regarded as a national calamity.” Then, in order to carry the work of fulsomeness to the utmost verge, these same prints wind up the posthumous biography by attributing to its departed subject such a catalogue of virtues that he would have been a perfect saint ad he in reality possessed a tithe of them.

The Law of Primogeniture

Original citation:

George W.M. Reynolds, 'The Law of Primogeniture'

Reynolds's Weekly Newspaper, 21 July 1850, p. 1.

In the Second Volume of Lord John Russell's work, entitled "Memoirs of the Affairs of Europe from the Peace of Utrecht," there is a long and eloquent description of that spirit of enterprise which is the origin and sustenance of great empires. The spirit may exhibit itself in various phases,—such as "commerce, conquest, love of glory, domination of the seas, planting of colonies," to use his lordship's own words: but whether it shines forth in one of those pursuits, or in all collectively, it is still the vital principle of every nation's *greatness*, in the common acceptance of the term. "Thus," says Lord John Russell, "the spirit of Rome was formed of love of freedom and of commerce. So long as this spirit continues unabated and has room to gratify itself, the state flourishes." His lordship then observes that the spirit thus spoken of "may exist in an absolute monarchy, as well as a free state:" and he emphatically adds, "But it seldom endures." That is to say, the spirit which is the principle of life in a great nation cannot last for ever, no matter whether the institutions of that nation be despotic as those of Russia, or semi-liberal as those of England: and he proceeds to explain wherefore. He says, "Because the law of hereditary succession may change the spirit of the nation, at any moment, from activity to indolence — from conquest to pusillanimity."

It is quite clear, then, from Lord John Russell's own showing, that every nation which has the principle of hereditary

succession in its institutions, contains the element of ruin. Sooner or later that element must develop itself and *change the spirit of the nation* so as to give it a downward tendency. This is the opinion – the solemnly recorded opinion – of Lord John Russell, the present Prime Minister of England. It is an opinion, moreover, which was not enunciated in the haste and hurry of a speech delivered on some very exciting occasion, - nor in the enthusiasm of those times when Lord John was a bidder for popularity at any price; - nor was the sentiment thrown out at a moment when political expediency was to be served, or when a sly hit was to be levelled at a King and an Aristocracy who would not countenance Lord John's Reform Bill. No: the opinion was recorded with the solemnity and forethought of the historian -penned in the tranquil year of 1828, when his lordship was not in office – and forming part of an eloquent disquisition on the rise and fall of empires, every word of which was written deliberately and well conned in the solitude of a studio.

Well, then, we have Lord John Russell's own authority for denouncing the hereditary principle in the strongest terms. But has his lordship ever attempted to change it? – has he shown the slightest disposition to grapple with the evil which, according to his own showing, is now existing, either latent or active, at the heart's core of this great nation? Has he even proposed to legislate for one of the most obnoxious phases in which the hereditary principle shows itself in this country? – I mean the law of primogeniture.

Primogeniture is defined as "that rule by which a title of dignity or an estate in land comes to a person in respect of his being an eldest male:" and the same authority says, "It is usual in England to settle all large estates, and the object of the

settlement is to keep the estates together and to perpetuate them in one family.” The consequence is that if a wealthy noble-man have five sons, the eldest inherits all the property, and the other four become State paupers and must be foisted upon the public purse: hence the countless sinecures *maintained* and the unnumerable useless places *intended* for the behoof of the scions of aristocratic families. Nothing can be more scandalous, than the fact that a perfect drove of high – born mendicants and titled beggars constantly need to be provided for: and nothing can be more cruel than the circumstances that the industrious millions are plundered in order to furnish the pension paid to those lazy cormorants.

The law of primogeniture is demoralising to a fearful extent: it perpetuates the most disgusting vices as well as the largest estates. The heir to an entitled estate will follow no useful profession; and idleness necessarily plunges him into every kind of debauchery. Hence the irrefragable fact that the English aristocracy are dissipated, luxurious, and voluptuous to a degree; - and hence are the manners and morals of high life a mixture of tinsel and profligacy, glossed over with a certain amount of eloquence and refinement. Mr. George Ensor says, “Lately every court of justice has exhibited lords discreditable or criminal;” and the Chancery proceedings taken in respect to the property of the Marquis of Hertford, gave publicity to aristocratic depravities which are hideous to contemplate. Of the Spanish nobility, amongst whom the law of primogeniture prevails, Jacob observes in the published account of his travels, “the figures and countenances are much inferior to those of the peasants;” and the *Quarterly Review*, in its 56th Number, attributes the degeneracy of the Spanish nobility to the law of primogeniture. Yet the *Quarterly* is an ultra-aristocratic

periodical! Of the Neapolitan nobles, who are likewise blessed with the law of primogeniture, Lord Nelson said, "They are rogues, and pimps, and fiddlers, who acted as might be expected at the last invasion."

Who and what are the hereditary nobles of England? They are of three distinct classes. One class is descended from the Norman ruffians who acted the part of murderers, spoliators, ravishers, robbers, and plunderers. Another class is descended from the infamous prostitutes who sold their persons to royal voluptuaries at different times, but principally in the atrocious reign of Charles the Second. The third class is the spawn of faction; comprising those men whose services in the House of Commons or in Ministerial dirty-work have been rewarded by titles. William Pitt and Lord Liverpool increased the peerage enormously in this manner; and the Whigs have never hesitated to follow the example of those Ministers. The principle of primogeniture has thus been made necessary, as it were, to all persons elevated to the peerage; and their families have, as a natural sequence, been thrown on the industry of an oppressed, half-starved, unrepresented, and over-taxed people.

Bacon, who is frequently quoted in Parliament, declared that in those countries where an hereditary nobility existed, "the common people were reduced to an abject state and became little better than slaves to that nobility." God knows this is now the case with England, where the industrious classes are mere hewers of wood and drawers of water for the rich and titled. The hereditary landlords are also the legislators of the country: they sit in the Upper House, and they possess the Lower House by their purses, their influence, their sons, and their relatives. The hereditary aristocracy, subsisting by the law of primogeniture, is therefore the really governing, ruling,

administrative power in the country. As a matter of course they legislate for the benefit of their own order in the first instance; and secondly, for the interests of that middle-class which supports or tolerates them. They avoid taxing themselves; as is shown by the fact that out of a revenue of 56,000,000*l.*, only 9,000,000*l.* are levied on *land*, and 47,000,000*l.* on *trade and industry*. Even when they do tax themselves, they secure an indemnity: for instance, the coarse tea is drunk by the masses, and the fine tea by the wealthy classes; yet the same duty is paid on each. Not unfrequently the hereditary landlords assume the indemnity, but carefully abstain from affording any relief to the popular burthens; as was the case with the 20,000,000*l.* sterling voted by Parliament for the emancipation of the West India slaves, nine -tenths of which money were paid to and received by the landlords of Great Britain; and yet no reduction in the price of sugar, which is a necessary of life, ensued from *that* measure. The 20,000,000*l.* were produced from the toil and labour of the British serfs and slaves at *home*, and paid to the British landlords at *home* likewise: but not a particle of advantage resulted to the masses from whose pockets so enormous a sum was taken.

I shall quote again from the *Quarterly Review*, the aristocratic periodical *par excellence*. In No. 95, it says, “The excessive accumulation of landed property into few hands, has been in gradual progress in this country during the past century, to the almost complete extinction of that most valuable class which once formed the staple of English society – the minor independent yeomen.” Mr. Ensor, in an admirable work upon property, published by Effingham Wilson, says, “There is no independence in England; the provisions of the people must be kept high, for their masters will it. Though nearly a million and

a half of the population are registered paupers, even under the present Poor Law, the agricultural labourers are becoming mendicants, and perish, notwithstanding all the extra contributions in aid of the poor rates, while the Vagrant Act has become a dead letter; so broken are the poor in spirit, so futile is the code.”

Such are the terrific results of the law of primogeniture and the attention that is consequently devoted to class-interests. The monopoly of the land in the possession of a few families is therefore a colossal evil; and the subject has formed the basis of one of the Seven Resolutions promulgated by the National Reform League. Indeed, a grand social change would result from the adoption of the principles set forth in that Resolution, which insists upon “the gradual resumption by the State (on the acknowledged principles of equitable compensation to existing holders, or their heirs) of its ancient, undoubted, inalienable dominion and sole proprietorship over all the lands, mines, turbaries, fisheries &c., of the United Kingdom and our Colonies; the same to be held by the State, as trustee, in perpetuity, for the entire people, and rented out to them in such quantities and on such terms as the law and local circumstances shall determine: - because the land, being the gift of the Creator to ALL, can never become the exclusive property of individuals – because the monopoly of the land, in private hands, is a palpable invasion of the rights of the excluded parties, rendering them more or less the slaves of landlords and capitalists, and tending to circumscribe or annul their other rights and liberties – because a monopoly of the earth by a portion of mankind is no more justifiable than would be the monopoly of air, light, heat, or water – and because the rental of the land (which justly belongs to the whole people) would

form a national fund adequate to defray all charges of the public service, execute all needful public works, and educate the population, without the necessity for any taxation.”

The land in any country ought to be the property of *all* the inhabitants of that country. It should be either equally divided amongst them all; or else held and farmed by the Government for the equal benefit of all. The Bible furnishes authority for this doctrine; and indeed the present system is not only revolting to the common sense of man, but is likewise opposed to the laws of God. In Leviticus it is expressly ordained – “The land shall not be sold for ever, for it is mine;” – and of course God’s law, delivered through Moses, applied to all the earth as well as to the territory of the Hebrews, and to the present age as well as to the Mosaic period – because God’s laws are based on immutable principles of justice and are universal in their application. Indeed, God ordained that the land was to be *equally divided* between all human beings; and foreseeing that inequalities in landed possessions would arise from various causes, God commanded that a fresh division should take place every fifty years. “And ye shall hallow the fiftieth year and proclaim liberty throughout all the land, unto all the inhabitants thereof: it shall be a jubilee unto you, and ye shall return every man unto his possession, and ye shall return every man unto his family.” The Book of Numbers expressly defines the mode of accomplishing the equitable division of the land: - “These were the numbered of the children of Israel, six hundred thousand and a thousand seven hundred and thirty. And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Unto these the land shall be divided for an inheritance according to the number of names. To many thou shalt give the more inheritance, and to the few thou shalt give the less inheritance. To every one shall his inheritance be

given, according to those that were numbered of him. Notwithstanding the land shall be divided by lot, according to the names of the tribes of their fathers they shall inherit. According to the lot shall the possession thereof be divided, between many and few.”

Now, what will lawn – sleeved prelates and aristocratic saints of the Lord Ashley school say to these arguments? How, in the face of the Book which they proclaim to be the *Word of God*, can they defend a system which exists in flagrant violation of the ordinances contained in that volume? Where is the excuse – where the apology for the unholy scheme whereby a comparatively few individuals not only obtain the chief property in the State, but likewise perpetuate its possession in their families? If noblemen had any humane feelings at all, they would be shocked at a system which compels them to disinherit all their younger sons in order to provide a colossal fortune for the eldest; - and if they had any shame, they would blush to see those younger sons quartered upon the public purse as beggars are upon the poor-rates.

The People's Cause

Original citation: G.W.M. Reynolds, 'The People's Cause',
Reynolds's Weekly Newspaper, 28 July 1850, p. 1.

The Session of 1850 is about to close without the enactment of a single measure for the benefit of the working classes. Slaves they are—and slaves they are to remain, so far as the Legislature can rivet their chains and perpetuate their bondage. Faithful to his promise, Mr. Feargus O'Connor brought forward his motion for the Charter, which would emancipate the White Slaves of Great Britain: and Ministers so contrived matters that the House was "counted out." A greater insult to the masses cannot be conceived. Last year the Commons, still wincing at the threatening occurrences of 1848, allowed Mr. O'Connor to deliver his opinions without interruption, and his motion to be carried to a division: but this year the House, emboldened by the success of reactionary measures abroad and the apparent apathy of the people at home, cut short the honourable gentleman's address and got rid of the subject by the most scandalous trick that can possibly be practised in the Legislature. There were not forty members found to advocate the popular cause and do their duty to the masses. The greater portion of the middle-class representatives whom Mr. Hume can succeed in "whipping in" for his little Charter, kept aloof when the discussion of the great Charter was coming on. The toiling millions must therefore know henceforth how far they can trust those gentlemen of "moderate measures," or whether they deserve to be trusted at all.

But that was not the only occasion on which the people have been insulted by the House of Commons during the present

session. Last week Mr. O'Connor gave notice that on a particular day he should move for the repeal of the legislative union between England and Ireland; and the announcement was received with derisive laughter. It may be all very well for "honourable gentlemen" to make themselves merry at the expense of the millions: but these millions are not in a mirthful mood out of doors. They seem to think it high time that something was done for them; and they look more serious than ever upon the matter. This seriousness becomes sombre too, and is verging fast to despair. The repeal of the union is a measure almost as popular amongst the masses in Great Britain, as it is in Ireland; because it is regarded as a measure of justice – and the English working-classes desire justice not only for themselves, but also for their Irish brethren. They are likewise humane: and they therefore read with indignation the report of that mirthfulness which was excited in the House of Commons by the announcement of a proposed remedy for Ireland's awful miseries. No doubt this proposal will experience the same fate as the motion for the enactment of the People's Charter, and will be got rid of by a "count out."

What inference must be drawn from these facts? Why, that in an assembly of 656 persons calling themselves the people's representatives, there are not forty individuals who have any sympathy with this working-class. No—not *forty* individuals: because this number constitutes "a House;" and "a House" cannot be formed when anything vitally touching the popular interests is brought forward for discussion. The Aristocracy and the Moneyocracy of the country possess the whole representations, with the exception of half-a-dozen independent Members who are of course powerless in the presence of such a tremendous array of determined opponents.

An American writer of eminence has drawn so graphic a picture of this “system” upon which such flagrant abuses are based, that I cannot do better than quote it in its entirety. The able commentator says, “The legislative power of England is vested in an hereditary Sovereign and two legislative bodies—the Houses of Lords and Commons. The House of Lords is composed of barons of England, an hereditary body; the English archbishops and bishops, some of the Irish prelates, and a number of Scotch and Irish lords elected by their peers. The Queen can create as many members of the House of Lords as she may think fit; and a threat was thrown out, in the time of William IV, that, unless the House passed the Reform Act, a sufficient number of new peers would be created for the purpose of passing that measure. The Queen’s consent is necessary to any new law. The members of the House of Commons are elected by a small portion of the people, upon no sound or ascertainable principle. Petty towns return a majority of the members for England; so that less than ten thousand electors have more representatives than all the electors of the metropolis and its suburbs, Liverpool, Manchester, Leeds, Sheffield, Birmingham, Bristol, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Dublin, and many other large towns put together. These petty towns are in the neighbourhood of the large aristocratic domains, and the voters are under control of the aristocracy of the neighbourhood. The voting is open; so that the necessary control is exercised over the voters by the landlord class at the hustings. The members are elected for seven years; and the people are not allowed to choose any but men of considerable property. The member for an English county must have 600*l.* per year; the member for a borough, 300*l.* per year, derived from landed property, or the public funds. The electors in the

boroughs must be leaseholders, paying a rental 10*l.* per year rates and taxes. This is the general qualification required by the Reform Act; but the old electors who continue to reside in the boroughs are allowed by that act to retain their right of voting. The old qualification depended on custom, and varied in the different boroughs: thus, in some of them, every rate-payer voted; in others, only a dozen or two of the citizens. Some of the smallest boroughs return but one member; the others return two each, with the exception of the old City of London proper, which returns four. Most of the counties return four members, being divided into two districts, each of which has two representatives. The electors are persons owning freehold property worth 2*l.* per year; copyhold property worth 10*l.* per year; certain leaseholders; and all occupiers paying a rent of 50*l.* per year. This latter sum is high enough to exclude nearly all the respectable householders who are not engaged in farming. The tenant-farmers vote as directed by their landlords; the voters in the little boroughs use their franchise so as to advance their interests in trade; and the majority take care not to offend their powerful neighbours. The poorer voters are bribed in some shape or other, where there is a severe contest. The whole system of representation is so contrived as to secure the overwhelming preponderance of the landed aristocracy in the House of *Commons*, as it is called. As to the House of Lords, it is in the exclusive possession of the same class. In Ireland, out of a population of eight millions, there are less than one hundred thousand electors. England is not in a much better plight; but, it is above all to be especially noticed, that *one – sixth part* of this trumpery electoral body return a majority of the so-called representatives of the people. No law can be made without the consent of the House of Lords; and the members of

that house vote by proxy; so that, although, *a noble lord* may be in France or Italy, he votes upon most of the questions brought under discussion. The power of the government is immense. In practice, the Sovereign interferes but little; but, if a self-willed or conceited man were upon the throne, he would soon make his power felt. At present the actual power of the monarch is very small; all public officers are chosen by the Ministers; and on a recent occasion Sir R. Peel objected even to allow the Queen to choose her own bedchamber women. The *veto* power is not practically exercised by the Sovereign; nor is it likely to be exercised by the Ministers, as they are required to control a majority of the House of Commons. If they fail to obtain such a majority on questions of vital importance, they resign their places to their opponents. It is at the present day the generally received theory of the British Constitution, that the Ministry should enjoy the confidence of the majority of the House of Commons; and thus the powers of the Executive are placed at the disposal of the so-called representatives of the people in that House. It is contended by the supporters of the existing electoral system, that the measures of the present House of Commons are not disapproved of by the absence of any means of ascertaining the opinions of the people. If those opinions were asked on any specific questions of importance, it would be found that the existing system is, in all its parts, disapproved of by an overwhelming majority. Before the passing of the Reform Act, the borough-mongers argued that the people never differed from the House. Supposing the assertion to be true, it would only prove that the people had been kept in ignorance of the blessings of freedom.”

An American has drawn this picture of British institutions; and after contemplating it in the truthful nakedness whence the veil of disguise is so completely drawn aside, it is enough to make one blush at being an Englishman. For when it is recollected that John Bull is incessantly enacting and re-enacting the despicable farce of calling himself free,—whom it is remembered that he goes swaggering about all over the continent, vaunting the superiority of British institutions,—when it is borne in mind that he pompously and insolently parades on all occasions the commercial enterprise and the wealth of the nation as proofs of its illimitable prosperity,—when, in fact, all the inflated boastings, the fume and froth, the arrogant assumptions and the impudent braggings of John Bull are taken into consideration, it is enough to disgust any one possessing sense sufficient to see through the despicable humbug. Fortunately, however, those persons who use the term “John Bull” as the impersonation of the national character, and who represent him in pictures as a great, fat, vulgar, pudding-headed fellow, with a broad-brimmed hat, a square-cut coat, and top-boots,—have not bestowed upon him one single attribute which belongs to the working-classes; and therefore this brutal invention of theirs must be considered as the embodiment of the gross self-sufficiency of the aristocracy, the purse-pride of the money-ocracy, the bigotry of the clergy, and the dogged brutality of the landocracy.

But to return to the subject with which I set out. The Session is drawing to a close; and nothing will have been done to ameliorate the condition of the White Slaves of England. Are Ministers absolutely besotted? Or are they sternly resolute? Whichever be the case, the results to the working-classes are unfortunately the same. Not a shilling is mitigated in respect

to the burthens which lie upon the necessities of life: not a political right has been conceded to the enslaved. Lord John Russell has declared that the people do not want reform; and Lord Palmerston has eulogised the “existing institutions which render liberty compatible with order.” Pretty liberty indeed, where five-sixths of the male adult population are utterly unrepresented in the legislative assemblies, and have not the slightest influence in making the laws which they are bound to obey or voting the taxes which they are compelled to pay. And as for order—why, how can it be disturbed when there are hordes of soldiers, bands of policemen, parks of artillery, and myriads of special constables, all ready to maintain it? But if the masses themselves do not wish to create disorder, it is not because they consider that they are free—but because they entertain a sublime confidence in the almighty power of truth; and knowing that it *must* prevail sooner or later, they depend on moral means alone for the attainment of their rights.

What good has the Government gained by endeavouring to stifle the voice of the people’s advocates?—what benefit has the oligarchical system reaped from political persecution? Let us see. Mr. Ernest Jones, Mr. Fussell, and Mr. Vernon, all three declared on the public platform at John Street—“We went into prison Chartists, and we have come out Republicans.” Now, assuredly, Republicanism goes farther than Chartism; and therefore the tyranny of Government, so far from putting down Chartists, has converted them into Republicans. And besides, popular as those patriots deservedly were *before* they went into their dungeons, they are ten thousand times more popular since they came out. Previously they were admired as staunch champions: now they are loved as victims and revered as martyrs. Oh! If the oligarchy could have heard the tremendous

burst of applause,—the shouts that rose again and again in waves of deafening sound,—which welcomed Mr. Vernon at the London Tavern, and Messrs. Jones and Fussell at John Street, on their first appearance after they left their damp, cheerless, solitary prison cells,—that oligarchy would have shrunk back appalled and dismayed from the enthusiastic demonstrations of the feelings of the masses!

Political persecution, then, will not hush those burning voices which speak between the people and their rulers. The masses will never fail to find champions to proclaim their wrongs with eloquent tongues, and to write them with iron pens and indelible ink. Governments must find some better course to adopt, than the moral torture-chamber of the Old Bailey. Our Galileos of the present day may be plunged into dungeons for proclaiming that the planet of Chartism revolves round the Sun of Truth: but when *they* come out again, they will reiterate the declaration. Let the question, then, be argued in fairness, and in a humane spirit; and let the Government listen attentively to those who have a right to be heard, instead of falling back upon the old tyrannies of coercion, repression, and vindictive prosecution. The people do not want anarchy—they want justice: they do not wish to destroy society – they seek only to re-construct it;—they aim at the consummation of no wrong but they resolutely demand their own rights.

The Lambeth Election

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Reynolds's Weekly Newspaper, 4 August 1850, p. 1.

Mr. Charles Pearson having resigned his seat for the borough of Lambeth, an election will immediately take place to fill up the vacancy. Mr. William Wiliams, the ex-Member for Coventry, was early in the field; and at the beginning of the week it was rumoured that amongst his opponents would be Alderman Salomons, Mr. Wire, and Mr. Miall. The two former of these gentlemen have however signified their intention not to contest the borough; and Mr. Miall has "made no sign"—at least, not up to the hour (Thursday afternoon) when I am penning these lines. The forbearance of those three worthies is most prudent as each and all would no doubt have been doomed to experience a most signal defeat. Mr. David Salomons is a man professing liberalism, but very far from being a liberal in his heart. A year has scarcely elapsed since he presided at a meeting convened at the London Tavern for the avowed object of sympathising with the brave Hungarians: but though the very purpose for which the assemblage took place should have inspired Mr. Salomons with a liberal spirit, he tyrannically, dictatorially, and impertinently endeavoured to exclude from any share in the proceedings all those whose names were not inscribed in the programme. For that despotic and overbearing conduct, he was most egregiously hissed at the time; and feeling that he was damned himself as a professor of liberalism, he is wise enough to forbear from intruding on the notice of the electors of Lambeth. As for Mr. Wire, his steady adhesion to the grossly corrupt corporation of London is a sufficient

extinguisher for any pretensions which he might be arrogant enough to advance in respect to the suffrages of a liberal constituency; and although his vanity, of which he possesses a large share, has already induced him to address an electoral body or two in the provinces, Lambeth is a little too near home to allow the repetition of so presumptuous a proceeding. As for Mr. Miall, it is well known that his sympathies for the working-classes are of a very limited character, and that while professing an affection for the principle of universal suffrage, he abominates the Charter and denounces the Chartist.

Under all circumstances, therefore, the three individuals just alluded to have acted wisely in not showing their precious countenances upon the hustings in Lambeth. Of the candidates who *are* in the field, Mr. William Williams assuredly has the greatest claims upon the confidence of the electors. He represented Coventry with honour to himself from the year 1835 to the dissolution in 1847; and during that period of twelve years he never gave a vote inimical to the interests of the working-classes. On the contrary, he was the most Liberal man in the House of Commons, with the exception of Mr. O'Connor and Mr. Duncombe; and, fearless of Ministerial sneers or aristocratic cock-crowing, he lost no opportunity of exposing the wanton extravagance and scandalous profusion of Whig expenditure. He seconded Mr. Sharman Crawford's motion for stopping the supplies until the nation's grievances should be redressed; and when Mr. Duncombe proclaimed the doctrines of Chartism in the House, Mr. Williams was in the minority that voted with him.

But if it be necessary to seek proofs of the fact that Mr. William Williams is the best man amongst the candidates for the representation of Lambeth, his own pamphlet, published at

the beginning of the present year, will afford the evidence required. In this little work he speaks out plainly—lashes the oligarchy mercilessly—and calls things by their right names. He shows that the people are plundered to an enormous extent by a rapacious aristocracy: and he honestly avers that, the industrious classes, who produce everything, are those which are thus fleeced. In fact, Mr. Williams has aggregated in this pamphlet such a mass of evidence proving the existence of the vilest abuses and the most flagrant tyrannies, that if anything could possibly arouse the indignation of the toiling millions to fever-heat, it would be the perusal of so bold and honest an exposure of their wrongs.

Speaking of Universal Suffrage, Mr. Williams defines it as “the great privilege which forms the distinction between the freeman and the slave;” and I need scarcely observe that of this principle he is a staunch supporter. I am also able to declare that Mr. Williams is an advocate for every other point in the People's Charter: or else his candidature would not have experienced a single line of commendation from my pen. That he is incapable of being hoodwinked or humbugged by the faction now in power, is evident from the manner in which he speaks of a set of politicians whom he looks upon as utterly dishonest and thoroughly unprincipled. He says, “The Whigs, in framing the Reform Act, foresaw that its results would only give to them a larger share of political power, and thereby enable them to get er out of the government, and, through a subservient House of Commons, to squander the resources of the country on their minions and aristocratic connections.” This is speaking frankly and honestly, and indeed accusing the Whigs of conduct so base, so treacherous, and vile that their

presence in office speaks (?)² against the system which could possibly elevate such men to power. But Mr. Williams not only accuses the Whigs of being animated with an earnest greed to provide for their “minions and aristocratic connections” at the expense of the country: he likewise proves the charge. Especially alluding to one flagrant case of Ministerial nepotism, he says, “The unpopular Governor of the Canadas—whoso principal recommendation for that important office is, being the fortunate husband of a niece of Earl Grey, the Colonial Secretary—has a salary of 7,000*l.* a year, paid by the Canadians, and imposed by the British Parliament, while the Governor of the great State of New York adjoining, with more than *double the population*, has 800*l.*, a year, and is an office sought and invariably filled by one of its most eminent citizens. The President of the United States has only, 5,000*l.* a year”. And speaking of the corrupt House of Commons and the way in which Ministers manage to get the estimates passed, Mr. Williams says, “I well remember an increase of more than 2,000,000*l.*, of the money being voted by *less than forty members*, the required number to form a House. A remarkable scene is presented in the House on a motion for going into Committee of Supply: a general fight and dispersion takes place, *a corps de reserve* of officials and expectants being kept at Bellamy’s dining-rooms, ready to defeat a motion to ‘*count out*’ the House, or to answer the ‘*Division Bell*,’ all being thus made safe, the ‘Supply nights,’ *when the People’s money is voted away by millions* are devoted to dinner parties and other free from care other free- from care enjoyments.”

² Word obscured by binding.

That Mr. Williams is sincere in his belief that large ameliorations are required in the political system, is proved by the contemptuous opinion he entertains of the pet measure upon which the Whigs erect their claims on public confidence. He asks, "Is it not an indisputable fact, that the Reform Act has *entirely failed* to realise any of those promised national blessings, for the attainment of which it was vauntingly pretended to be passed? Does it not, then, exhibit, in a questionable character, the sincerity of its promoters—especially that of Lord John Russell—who, without venturing to assert that it has effected the promised Reforms, has strenuously opposed all of the many subsequent propositions for reforming the House of Commons?" With regard to the National Debt, Mr. Williams does not speak out less plainly than on the subject of political reform: for he condemns "the iniquitous immorality of mortgaging the produce of the industry of generations yet unborn to pay the interest of a debt so shamefully contracted:" and he then observes, that "if future generations should look into the items of which the debt is composed, and discover this and so many millions added to it to provide for a prodigal expenditure exceeding the revenue in a period of *profound peace*, it might shako the stability 'of the whole fabric.'"

The whole tenor of Mr. Williams's pamphlet is to show that unless the largest and most sweeping measures of reform be conceded, the people will take them; and in order to confirm this opinion, he adduces the admissions made by men who have held high offices in the State. For instance, he quotes the following words from a speech delivered by Sidney Herbert:—"We see wealth at one end enormously on the increase, and poverty as rapidly increasing at the other; the rich becoming

still richer, and the poor becoming every day more numerous and more poor; the cause has baffled the sagacity the most acute philosophers, and goes on in defiance of human skill and foresight. Whatever the cause, this is a most dangerous state of society.” Mr. Williams considers this to be a foreboding of the inevitable convulsion which Sir James Graham foresaw at the time he penned this solemn warning to the aristocracy: — “*Whenever this country presents the spectacle of millions supplicating for bread, then will the people sweep away titles, pensions, and honours.*” Thereupon: Mr. Williams observes, “No reflecting man can look at the present position of the country, and witness the annual exhaustion of its resources after so long a period of peace without the most fearful apprehensions. There must, indeed, be something palpably ‘rotten in the State,’ when such an enormous amount of money is exacted from the people—not for the requirement of the Public Service, but to be lavished upon almost countless useless placemen, sinecurists, and pensioners, and in maintaining an enormous military establishment; and that, too in the face of the revenue being year after year “*insufficient* for this prodigal expenditure.” Mr. Williams, conscious of the existence of those “impending difficulties” which terrify Sidney Herbert and elicit a solemn warning from Graham, inquires how they are to be averted: ‘and, in considering the question, he frankly avows that any expectation of *timely reforms* with a House of Commons “elected under the provisions of the Reform Act,” is *hopeless*. The corrupt practices—bribery and intimidation—at elections, convince him that “the whole system is unsound” and he says that ‘the deformity of the system, mendaciously called a Representation of the People, may be exhibited in various phases; for example: take the Yarmouth scale of bribery—

1,500,000*l.* would buy the seats of the majority of the House of Commons, which would dispose of the lives, liberty, and property of the people of the United Kingdom! This delusive burlesque, called a Representation of the People, cannot be regarded by Englishmen without shame, and, from the desolating evils it inflicts upon the toiling millions, without painful sorrow by those who have hearts to feel for the woful sufferings of their fellow countrymen. Can we look on this picture and call ourselves *freemen*? Does it not but too plainly tell the industrious classes that they are but the hewers of wood and drawers of water of their oligarchical rulers?"

The concluding passages of Mr. Williams' pamphlet are so full of good sense, enlightened notions, and straightforward reasoning, that I offer no apology for transferring them at length to these columns. He says, "Although I am unable to discover upon what just or reasonable grounds the elective franchise should be conferred upon me and withheld from the constructors of the steam-engine and the ingenious machinery it works, and from those whose mechanical ingenuity has invented and constructed the complicated machinery employed in our manufactures, whose capabilities are computed to perform the work of 600,000,000 of men, which have conferred upon our country a pre-eminence above every other nation: neither can I, for the same reason, see a just cause why the elective franchise should be refused to the labourer, whose industry makes the earth yield her abundance—to the miner, who digs the vast hidden treasures from the bowels of the earth—to the artizan, who produces linen, silk, cotton and woollen cloths; in short, to all whose skill and industry produce the necessities and luxuries of civilized life; while the placeman, the idle pensioner, and the unmerited sinecurist, not

only enjoy, but are known to traffic their franchise with unblushing impunity. Besides, every man is liable to be drawn for and compelled to serve for the defence of his country, in the militia; and during the last war, to be drawn to serve in the Army of Reserve: and, with some privileged exceptions, liable to be impressed to man the Fleet; and in the event of a war, the same authority would be again resorted to. What greater claim has any man to have his voice heard in the Legislature of his country, than those who are thus compelled to devote their lives in her defence, and in upholding her renown and power, and who produce her wealth and boundless resources— all the requirements and comforts of life for the industrious as well as the idle? I desire to see the House of Commons elected by the *People*, instead of—as it now is—by the influence of the Aristocracy and of *Money*; an Aristocracy, too, a provision for whose children, relatives, and connections, costs the people of this country infinitely more than the three millions and a half of paupers maintained and relieved from the poor-rate; in reference to which, Sir James Graham, in his pamphlet before-mentioned, said ‘One faction clings to the Government of the day, and blindly supports its prodigal expenditure in the hope of sharing its patronage, and of making that provision out of the public purse for dependants, which the hereditary family estates can no longer bear.’ It must be evident to you, the mass of the electors, that you are swamped by the 161,000 of your body who elect a majority of the House of Commons; and that you, who form the great majority, are unable to protect yourselves, or the six millions of your *unenfranchised* fellow countrymen, against the existing class legislation, which fixes a degrading brand on the industrious millions, by making the laws more oppressive to them than to the rich, *especially in the*

system of levying the taxes, which are imposed on them with cruel injustice and inequality, and lavished on our oligarchical rulers and those who pander to the ministry of the day. You, the Electors, (always excepting the *corrupt*,) have an interest in common with the Non-electors in changing a state of things equally oppressive to both. Nor should you be forgetful that the Aristocracy, who virtually make the laws for you—whether Tory, Whig, or Conservative—are compactly united to maintain their unconstitutional power; neither should you permit yourselves to be deluded with even *the hope* that Emancipation from this oligarchical misrule can, by any other means, be accomplished; for, as Bentham said, ‘*It is only by making the ruling few uneasy that the oppressed many have any chance of redress.*’ Those of you who are content with your present abject condition, should, if overtaken by distress, utter neither lamentation nor complaint; but those of you who would elevate yourselves from the condition of the Slave to that of the Freeman, should take example from the wise man of old, and put your shoulders to the wheel, thereby placing yourselves in your rightful position of possessing your due share in the making of the laws of your country, and thus bring to an end the power of unfaithful Stewards who have so long oppressed you, and consumed the fruits of your hard-earned industry.”

I have quoted thus copiously from the pamphlet written by Mr. William Williams, in order to convince those democrats who may happen to possess the elective suffrage in the borough of Lambeth that the candidature of this gentleman deserves their support. The Chartists can command upwards of a thousand votes in that borough; and, in the absence of a candidate who would go the whole hog for “the Charter and

something more,” let them give their support to the one who will at all events vote for the Charter.”

A Federal Union of the Democrats

Original citation:

G.W.M. Reynolds, 'A Federal Union of the Democrats',
Reynolds's Weekly Newspaper, 11 August 1850, p. 1.

The Executive Committee of the National Charter Association has issued a notice calling a meeting for the 18th instant, to take into consideration the propriety and the means of forming a Federal Union of the various democratic Societies whose headquarters are in London. That this meeting will be attended by the leading men of those Societies, there can be no doubt; and that their deliberations will result in the accomplishment of the proposed aim, is to be earnestly desired. There cannot be much difficulty in laying the foundations for such a union. All staunch, enlightened, and true-hearted democrats are agreed upon the principle that "the Charter is only a means to an end," and that political reforms are only valuable so far as they lead to the attainment and establishment of social rights. The day has gone by when the Charter was regarded as the sum total of all proletarian wants: the day has likewise gone when the masses fixed all their attention upon political changes without devoting a thought to their probable influence upon the social system. There is not now a mechanic or an artisan, in the habit of attending democratic meetings, who is indifferent to the cause of social amelioration; and the example of France, - prostrate for the moment on account of its ignorance of social rights and duties, - has aroused a spirit of earnest reflection in the popular mind of this country. The utter inability of declaiming on the "six points" without showing to what ends the attainment of that Charter ought to lead, is now recognised

by all the thinking portion of the working-classes: and hence is it that the present moment is deemed so favourable for the working out of the idea of a Federal Union of the Democratic Societies.

The cause requires that strength which a cohesion of all its sections can alone impart; it needs that vigour which the concentration of energies can best afford. It is useless to talk of fraternity upon platforms, and not practice the doctrine in the organization of the progressive movement. If the views, hopes, and aspirations of all staunch democrats are really directed towards one point, let there be no diverging from the straight road which leads to it: and if we be all veritably and truly earnest in travelling along that road, we may as well journey in company, rather than reservedly and exclusively group ourselves into different bodies. Let it be recollected that this road is lined and hemmed in by our enemies, -enemies who are ever watchful of opportunities to catch us tripping, to assail us on our weak points opportunities to catch us tripping, to assail us on our weak points, to pick up all venturous advanced guards, and to seduce over to themselves all stragglers from our ranks. Is it not, then, incumbent upon us to concentrate our numbers so as to present as imposing an aspect as we can possibly make to the view of these Argus-eyed foes? – is it not our duty to travel in a compact band along the glorious pathways of reform, and strengthen our cause by unity of action and identity of purpose?

The complaint should not be that there is not enough agitation amongst the working -classes in the country; but that this agitation has been too much broken up into sectional movements, - having too many separate currents, flowing in a variety of channels; - so that instead of the whole force of this

moral pressure being condensed into one mighty volume rolling on steadily as the flow of the great Orinoko river, which knows no change of tide, the effect has been rather that of the Maelstrom where the conflict of many currents creates the confusion of a whirlpool.

The necessity of a federal union of the democratic bodies is therefore apparent: and as the National Charter Association, the Fraternal Democrats, Mr. O'Brien's national Reform League, and the Socialists generally, are all agreed upon fundamental principles, it is difficult to understand why such an alliance should not take place. Indeed, the necessity of inculcating social doctrines concurrently with political ones, has been so ably treated by that staunch democrat, Mr. George White, of Bradford, in a "Chartist Catechism" recently published by him, that I cannot do better than transfer his admirable remarks to my comments, he says, "The benefit that the working – classes will derive from the Charter (when it becomes the law of the land) will entirely depend upon the intelligence of the people: if they are sufficiently enlightened as to their true interests they will elect well-trying and disinterested friends of mankind as their representatives -men who will devote themselves to make upright laws, whereas, if through ignorance or neglect, they return a political cheat they will be no better than before. The enactment of the People's Charter would be the establishment of the political rights of the people, and would place power in their hands to accomplish their social emancipation. Political rights may be compared to a joiner's tools: if they are properly used they will make every useful article of furniture, but would be utterly useless in unskilful hands. A thorough knowledge of social rights is therefore indispensably necessary to the due exercise of political rights. The meaning of Social Rights is the

right to enjoy life without being the mere machines of other men; the right to apply our skill and labour to our own advantage instead of toiling to enrich others; the right of a free possession of a portion of the land, which was created by God for all his creatures, and not to be monopolised by the few; the right to live in peace, plenty, comfort and security as far as the productive powers of mankind will admit. As a matter of course this definition will alarm the rich, in the same manner as a policeman alarms a thief; but it will not alarm an honest man who is willing to live in peace with his fellow man, and become a useful member of society. Justice cannot go too far. And the only question for us to examine is the important one, is it just? Doubtless we shall be termed Levellers, Anarchists, and all the opprobrious epithets which are continually cast on us; but the abuse of interested parties cannot destroy the truth. The motto, A fair day's wage for a fair day's work, is an acknowledgement and an admission of social slavery; because the recipient of daily wages is as much the slave as those by whom he is employed, as the black slaves about whom we hear such hypocritical cant. That motto should therefore be expunged from the vocabulary of all true democrats. Perfect freedom of mind and body is our ultimatum, and nothing less. The Americans possess the political rights which I allude to, and are nevertheless in a state of social slavery, as far as wages are concerned. 'Employers and employed' is the rule there as well as here. The reason is that the American people have not yet purged themselves of the slime and filth which clings to our old monarchical system. The prejudices of ages lead them to look upon the name of REPUBLIC as the beau ideal of their aspirations; and as the possession of land is a matter of easy achievement, they are not so impoverished as the working

classes of this country, and feel less the necessity of a thorough social reform. Besides, their education, both lay and clerical, causes them to look upon the present system as the natural order of things; but happily there are a large number who are pointing the road to the establishment of a system which will secure an inalienable home, and a guarantee against want, by securing to those who require it a quantity of land. This they can easily accomplish by their votes, when the masses become sufficiently enlightened; whereas we are utterly powerless through want of our political rights. Some of the most able and philanthropic in the world would have endeavoured to enlighten the people on these matters; and yet we see that mankind are still in such a state of ignorance concerning them. This arises from various causes. The leading one is that Education (so termed) is corrupted at its source: and instead of developing, strengthening, and giving health to the youthful mind, it is like the impure milk which a child sucks from a diseased nurse. One destroys or undermines the health of the mind as surely as the other does that of the body; and books, periodicals, newspapers, and all printed matter calculated to instruct, are mainly in the hands, or under the control of, the rich; and so many impediments are thrown in the way of the people's friends, that it is almost impossible to place the truth before them. All who profit by the present system of plunder, endeavour to keep the people in blind darkness: and by the assistance of lying priests, of all denominations, they have succeeded in making the mass of mankind believe that this murderous state of things is the will and ordination of a benevolent and merciful God; and thus by destroying the mind, they have subjected the body to a fixed and unrelenting system of slavery, made tenfold worse, inasmuch as some of the most

wretched of its victims are taught to believe that they are free. It may be said that I am adopting an injudicious course by my statement concerning priests, knowing the great influence they possess over the minds of the people: but I answer that if we wilfully close our eyes to the truth, no power in heaven or on earth can save us. It is true that all manner of priests have shown themselves open and direct enemies of the people's rights, and mere panderers to the rich. They have thus falsified the doctrines which they profess to teach, and practically denied Him whom they profess to follow. He taught that all men are equal, and should be brothers, whereas they support the present system of tyrant and slave. The object of Chartism is to make all men as free and happy as god intended them to be. Every true Chartist looks on his fellow man as a friend and brother; and the same liberty which he claims for himself, he desires all other men to possess. He wishes to establish a veritable bond of brotherhood amongst all men, and to abolish forever the unjust system which converts one man into the slave or machine of another. It may be argued that the slavery which I raise so much objection has always existed in some form: and I may be asked how I can hope to abolish that which appears inherent in man's nature? But let me reply that this plausible mode of upholding a fraudulent system has often been adopted by those who profit by it. As well might a man propose to abolish railways and steam boats, because they were unknown to our forefathers, as to defend a palpable injustice by reason of its antiquity. Wherever the mind of man was allowed full scope, a corresponding improvement has been the result. In arts, science, manufactures &c., mighty progress has been made: but the science of society appears to be a sealed book, and thus we find, that whilst all other matters which come under

the untrammelled guidance of man's intellect go on improving, the great question of questions is at a complete stand-still. Modern governments are like a clock whose weights are run down. They are the same now as they were centuries ago. Their sole aim appears to consist in casting obstructions in the road of progression, instead of keeping pace with the requirements of the age. But notwithstanding all the barriers which are placed in the people's way, they have made great strides towards freedom's goal of the last twenty years. They are rapidly acquiring a knowledge of their rights, and rejecting the foolish mummeries of bygone days."

Such are the admirable ideas and lucid arguments of Mr. George White; and their excellence supersedes the necessity of any apology for the length of the quotation. He tells the world that the Chartist "looks on his fellow man as a friend and brother;" and therefore let the democratic Societies justify the assertion thus made by a tried champion of their cause. Let them resolve upon a perfect unity of action, - upon the concentration of all scattered energies, - upon the amalgamation of all elements of moral power, - and, last though not least, upon the oblivion of all past dissensions. The Executive committee of the National Charter Association has taken the initiative towards the accomplishment of these aims, by the convocation of the democratic leaders for the 18th instant; and, if no good result should ensue, the members of that Committee will at all events have done their duty. They long to carry out the principles of fraternity in all their sublime meaning and to the full extent of their grand significance: they themselves, from the first moment they entered office, have held in their hands the olive-branch of peace, and have never been the fomenters of discord. Their attitude has been dignified

in the presence of immense difficulties; and though ungenerous innuendos have been thrown out against them, they have the satisfaction attendant upon the consciousness of their own upright dealing and honourable policy. Detesting calumny and despising calumniators, they have “pursued the even tenor of their way,” in the full conviction that they possess the confidence of the working classes throughout the land – a confidence to which they are incapable of proving treacherous or untrue.

It is, then, a portion of the policy of the Executive Committee to establish this Federal Union of the Democratic Societies, if possible. Such an alliance becomes the more necessary, inasmuch as a glorious opportunity for the working classes to make a grand and imposing though peaceful demonstration, will be afforded next year. I mean, when the Exhibition of the Industry of all Nations shall be opened in London; on which occasion the National Chartists should hold a Monster Meeting, and present a Monster Petition to Parliament. This meeting may be held in Hyde Park itself (if not against the law): for inasmuch as a portion of the People’s Park has been taken as a site whereon to erect a building for the Exhibition, I do not see how it can be possibly held improper for the working classes to assemble in another portion of that park for the peaceable adoption of a humble petition to the House of Commons. However, the details of the plan, if the suggestion be adopted, will be duly settled by the Executive Committee; and as the discretion of this body may be taken as a guarantee against any violation of the law, the middle classes may rest assured that there will be no need for the staves of special – constables.

Capital, Labour and the Land

Original citation: G.W.M. Reynolds, 'Capital, Labour, and the Land', *Reynolds's Weekly Newspaper*, 18 August 1850, p. 1.

It is high time that the working classes in this country should understand their true position. Whether they be contented or discontented with it, does not in any way affect the question. Slaves they are – and serfs they will remain, so long as they are unrepresented in Parliament and are governed by an oligarchy. If any man of the working class be contented because he happens to be earning tolerable wages for the moment, his contentment can only arise from ignorance as to the rights of which he is deprived, and the amount of prosperity which the possession of those rights would ensure him. Because he now earns, for example, twenty – five shillings a week, has he no emulation to obtain double or treble that sum? Yet his labour ought to produce him three or four times as much as it now does. And how do I prove this assertion? By the fact that his labour not only supports himself, but also the idlers who do not work at all and who nevertheless devour all the luxuries which are produced by his industry. But this man ought not to be called upon to toil for any idlers whatsoever: the fruits of his industry should be his own; - and if this were so, he would not obtain mere necessities, but would be in the enjoyment of at least a fair proportion of those luxuries which are no monopolised by idlers. If, therefore, the working-man will only look at the question in this light – which is the true and proper one – he will speedily see that however good his wages may be, he is still a slave in the worst sense of the term.

I will suppose that 100 men are working in a factory, each at 20s. a week. Such a factory would yield its owner a clear profit of 500*l.* a year at the very lowest, after paying everything. But why should each of his workmen have only 52*l.* a year to live upon, while he has 500*l.*? The distinction is preposterous. But it will be said by the defenders of the present system that the owner of this factory has embarked his capital in it, and must receive adequate returns. Well, suppose that he has thus embarked 20,000*l.* The interest at five per cent. would only be 1000*l.*; and if he looks to make more, he is a usurer to all intents and purposes. Admitting, then, that he has a right to this 1000*l.* as the interest of his capital, upon what ground can he claim the other 4000*l.*?

But when the rights of *his* capital are asserted, the workmen in his employ may assert the rights of *their* labour. This labour is *their* capital, as much as the owner's money is a capital to him: and if he has a right to interest on his capital, they have a right to interest upon their's. but how fix the value of the workmen's capital – or, in other words, their labour? By what it will produce. It produces, then, the 5000*l.* after all the current expenses are paid: or the 4000*l.* after the interest on the owner's money – capital is paid. And therefore, to compel each man in that factory to take only 52*l.* a year, is nothing more nor less than a flagrant injustice.

But it will be urged by the apologists of the present system, that if it were not for the owner's capital being embarked in that factory, the workmen would have no employment at all. In other words, it is asserted that Labour cannot subsist of itself without Capital. This is a fallacy – a downright falsehood. Because Labour has hitherto been held entirely subservient to Capital, by a murderous system of monopoly and wrong, it is

no reason why Labour should not emancipate itself. That it has not already done so, is no proof that it cannot. The Russians have been long held in bondage: but no one doubts as to their eventual freedom, some day or another. So it is with the enslaved sons and daughters of toil. Already has the light of truth begun to dawn and though Labour be still held subservient to Capital, the fiction of the *necessity* of this servile, grovelling dependence has exploded. To know that a better state of things may exist, is to desire it: to desire it, is to will it – and to will it, is speedily to have it.

The principle of co-operation in trades proves to demonstration that Labour *can* do without Capital. But, on the other hand, all the money-capital in the world is useless – utterly, thoroughly, miserably useless – without the assistance of Labour. The money-capitalist may build his factory and purchase his raw material: but unless he can fill that factory with work-men who shall convert his raw material into marketable produce, he is as helpless as the babe unborn.

Labour, then can do without money-capital: but money-capital cannot do without Labour. And yet the possessor of the money-capital monopolises the lion's share of the produce, leaving the labour-capital a beggarly pittance as its reward. I say that this is a scandalous condition of things, and proves that the present arrangements of the social system are all in favour of one class, and antagonistic to the interests of another class: in plain terms, the employers are favoured by the system, while the employed are crushed and trampled under it.

Apply the illustration of the factory to the agricultural districts. A landowner possesses a large estate, producing him 10,000*l.* a-year. The labourers upon that estate receive each upon an average 8*s.* a -week. Yet without their industry in

cultivating the soil, not a blade of corn would grow upon that estate. They rear the crops, drain the land, fatten the oxen, and tend the sheep: they sow, reap, and garner in. but for whom? For the one individual who monopolises all the luxuries, and leaves them absolutely without the bare necessities of life? Can any honest man vindicate such a system as this? – can any true philanthropist defend such social arrangements?

And what, then, are the direct and positive results of this system? Why, that the man who makes the costliest garments for the indolent great one, is himself in rags, - that the man whose labour rears the abundant harvest, is himself wanting bread, - that the man who builds stately palaces, has only a wretched hovel to shelter him! And yet this system finds its defenders. But who are theses apologists? Those who profit by the injustice which they excuse – who fatten upon the social corruption which they vindicate. Their word is not worth taking in the matter: their's must necessarily be a one – sided and selfish view. It is the apology of the sinecurist for his useless place – of the pensioner for his undeserved pension. The Emperor of Russia may insist that his autocratical tyranny is a necessity: and he is very likely to proclaim it as such, because he profits by it. But the world is not bound to believe him. So it is with the defenders of those abuses which are the source of so much wealth, luxury, pleasure, and enjoyment for them. But if any man can persuade me that when the bees have made and stored up the honey in the hive, the drones have a right to come and suck it all out of the comb, leaving the bees themselves nothing but the wax, - then I shall indeed consider that I am demented, or that the world is topsy-turvy.

But it is not only in respect to capital and labour that the system is unjust;— it is not only in the fact of indolence being

pampered and industry being starved, that the present arrangements of society are all wrong. The same flagrant injustice exists with regard to the land. For the land was given by God as a garden for the sustenance of the whole human family; and every individual has a right to his equal share of the produce. No man, and no set of men, have any right to take or keep possession of the land, to the utter exclusion of the rest. There are in Great Britain, Ireland, and in the British Islands, 77,210, 285 acres of land; and the population is 27,019,558, according to the last census. The quantity of land would give 2 acres, 3 roods, 17 perches, to every man, woman and child of the whole population. This would be 14 acres, 1 rood, 3 perches to every family – each family averaging five persons. Calculations have proved that land let out at 3d. per perch, or 2l. per acre in field-gardens, produces a profit to the labourer of 20l. a-year: therefore, if the soil were properly cultivated, the annual profit to the cultivators would be 878,960,000l. divide this profit amongst the whole population, and there would be upwards of 32l. a-year for every individual (man, woman, and child). But taking the average of families, and every family would have 160l. a-year. The land is the birthright of the whole people – not some of the people: and from the above calculations, which are irrefragable, it is clear that every individual, including the babe just born, is entitled to the value of 32l. a-year annually. But this only regards the cultivating of the surface of the soil. The wealth *beneath* the surface is likewise an injustice the birthright of the whole people; - and therefore if calculations were made relative to the value of the mines, it could be shown that so far from pauperism existing in the country, every individual ought to be not only the possessor of the necessaries, but also a partaker in the luxuries of life.

Lastly, were every one to do his fair proportion of work in all useful things, and were there no idlers, five hours' labour a day for *each* person old enough and able to work, would be sufficient for all purposes of agriculture, manufacture, mining, &c., thus leaving ample leisure for mental improvement and innocent recreation.

Reader, these are no Utopian views nor idle theories. They are *the* principles of practical plans, easy of realization. The barriers to their being carried out are two-fold: first, the tyranny of the few – secondly, the apathy of the many. But the tyranny of the few can be neutralized by the determination of the many. And this determination can be shown by all those moral means which have accomplished past reforms. Though truth be potent, it must be asserted by the tongues of men: for it will not proclaim itself. Its pressure must be guided and directed against all corrupt institutions: it is like a machine that is mighty to do much when set a -going, but which will not work of its own accord. In plain terms, if the masses do not assert their rights, and show that they understand what their rights are, they will not attain them. Heaven does not help those who refuse to help themselves. Were the masses active, resolute, energetic, and united, they could so wield the battering -ram of Truth that the colossal edifice of injustice though its foundations have been strengthened by the concrete tyrannies that have been accumulating for centuries would speedily totter and soon fall. Not a drop of blood need be shed – not a hostile finger raised, in order to reach this grand consummation: the intelligence and moral power of the masses, if directed with annuity of purpose, are amply sufficient for the achievement of the sublime result.

The Present Social System

Original citation:

G.W.M. Reynolds, 'The Present Social System', *Reynolds's Weekly Newspaper*, 25 August 1850, p. 1.

Britain is one of the most wretchedly governed countries in the whole world; and the mass of its population is held in an utter state of bondage and serfdom. The privileged orders take good care to keep the government in their own hands; and they mock the people with a show liberty, while its reality is unknown. What liberty, in the name of common sense, does the working-man enjoy? He is compelled to obey laws in the making of which he has no voice, and to pay taxes in the granting of which he is not called upon for an assent. This is tyranny – flagrant, unmistakable, undeniable tyranny. By what right has one man to make a law and say to another, “By virtue of this edict of *mine* I shall imprison, transport, or even hang you, if you dare to contravene it.” Or what right has one man to say to another, “I intend to levy so much money upon your industry, and if you don’t pay it I shall seize your goods or throw your body into prison.” Surely such conduct is only that which a master dares pursue towards a slave?—and in fact, the whole industrial population of these realms *are* the serfs and bondsmen of an oligarchy.

Now, view the matter in what light you will, reader – and you can honestly come to no other conclusion than that the millions are the slaves of the few. These few have usurped all privileges and monopolised all luxuries: they have constituted themselves the sole lords of the creation, and have hired priests to justify their tyranny and made laws to defend it. When they

goad men to desperation, they denounce them as seditious and plunge them into vile dungeons: or perhaps they employ soldiers to bayonet and policemen to bludgeon them. Then, all being over, they thank Almighty God for preserving the country from “those convulsions which have shaken other lands.”

Let us look calmly and deliberately at a few facts. Here stands a working man – and there stands a lord. The working man is in rags – the lord is clothed in fine raiment: the working man has a famished wife and starving children – the lord has a family revelling in luxuries. The working man thinks himself well off if he gets a bit of meat two or three times a week: the lord not only fares sumptuously every day, but thinks nothing of expending five or six guineas in wine and dessert after his dinner. The working-man toils through life without being able to save a single shilling for his maintenance in old age: the lord has not the slightest care for tomorrow. The working-man dies in a workhouse—but the lord goes easily out of this world on a bed of down. And yet the working-man is the impersonation of Industry—whereas the lord is the impersonation of Idleness. Surely, then, the social system which treats Industry so scurvily and Idleness so bountifully, must be radically wrong: surely the natural order of things must be reversed. If there should be want, privation, and misery anywhere, decidedly they should not be the lot of honest toil: and if there must be inordinate luxury and pampered enjoyment in the world, they certainly should not be bestowed upon disgraceful indolence.

No man ought to be called upon to work for another who is himself able to work. Such a system is nothing less than downright robbery. It is robbing the industrious man of the hard - earned fruits of his industry. It is robbing his wife –

robbing his family. But the wickedness of the system is only equalled by the cool impudence with which it is done. “Here, you fellows, go upon my estate – toil from morning to night – produce me ten thousand a – year from that land – and I will give you each eight shillings a-week!” Or else – “Here, you factory-slaves, go into that mill – work yourselves to the leanness and complexion of spectres – produce me twenty thousand a-year – and I will give you each twenty shillings a-week!” This is the way the system works: and yet we are told that the country is happy and free, and that the age is a civilised and enlightened one!

Can the working classes ameliorate their condition if they choose?—have they the privilege of making a market of their labour and fixing its value?—are the means of self-emancipation from wages-slavery in their power?—and is it a sign of contentment of their part because they do continue to work at the existing scales of remuneration? To all these questions an emphatic negative must be returned. So long as they are excluded from the enjoyment of political rights, they can in nowise effect the least improvement in their condition. How can such an improvement be effected? Only by virtue of good laws. But the House of Commons, so long as it represents only capital and class-interests, will never make men, until the working-classes can get themselves properly represented in that House of Commons, they must remain in bondage. The present social system is a vast net-work so admirably contrived as to enmesh the whole industrial position and render them powerless to help themselves: the web is loosened just sufficiently to allow them to perform the prescribed amount of labour for their taskmasters – but if they dared to think of

labouring only for themselves, the web would be drawn tight and every limb would be paralyzed at once.

It is useless for the working-classes to dream of improving their condition, so long as they possess no political rights. All the laws that affect labour and wages, emanate from the House of Commons: and these laws are now made by those who profit by that labour and pay those wages. They are not likely, therefore, to legislate against their own interests. But if some of the men who perform that labour and receive those wages were to get into the House of Commons, they would soon proclaim the necessity of altering the laws. Such men, however, cannot possibly become the representatives of their own order so long as the franchise is limited to the class that is directly and positively interested in excluding them from the Legislature. There are 850,000 electors: and these electors are the noblemen, gentlemen, tenant-farmers, and wealthy shop-keepers. There is scarcely a working-man in the whole electoral body. Will such a body, then, choose a working-man as a Member of Parliament! They never have yet – and they never will. They choose the representatives of their own interests: and as these interests are necessarily opposed to the interests of the working-classes, the so-called representatives of the people are positively and virtually the enemies of the working classes. Thus, Labour is not only unrepresented—but it is positively treated as something to be tyrannized over, made a convenience of, and enslaved!

If the working-classes be contented with this state of things, they must be ignorant barbarians and despicable serfs that ever hugged the chains of a willing bondage. But they are not contented: and hence the political agitation which is constantly at work, more or less, in the country. The masses know that

they ought to possess rights, and demand wherefore they are deprived of them. They are sick of being told that they are free-born Britons, when they feel the iron of bondage entering their souls. Free! why, the Legislature may pass any laws it chooses, and the masses have no power of saying yes or no in the business. Free! why, the Legislature can double taxation tomorrow if it chooses, and the millions would have nothing to do but pay and hold their tongues. Free! why, if they assemble in great numbers to petition most humbly for their natural rights, they are denounced as a wicked, seditious, and evil-intentioned mob. Free! O yes, they are free to starve, or leap from bridges, or die in pauper-houses or on dung-hills!

To those who defend the social system, I beg to observe that there are upwards of 80,000 prostitutes in London, 99 out of every 100 of whom would cheerfully abandon their hideous calling and turn to honest labour if such honest labour were open to them; and there are 30,000 needle-women whose average earnings are 2s. 6d. or 3s. a week, and a great number of whom are consequentially driven to prostitution in order to save themselves from positive starvation! Does the apologist of existing institutions require further arguments to convince him that the system is rotten to the very core? If so, let him ponder upon the fact that every seventh individual in the country is in a state of pauperism – that our gaols are crowded with the victims of ignorance, tyranny, and bad laws – that deaths from starvation and suicides through want and misery are so common as to create no wonder at all – that mendicancy has become a well organized system with an infinite variety of phases – and that hundreds of thousands of human beings have positively been swept away by famine within the last few years in Ireland! Let the upholder of existing institutions meditate on

all these circumstances, and then say whether there be anything that requires improvement – and, if so, whether it be possible to effect such improvement without re-constructing and re-modelling the social system altogether.

To Sir Joshua Walmsley, M.P.

Original citation: G.W.M. Reynolds, 'To Sir Joshua Walmsley, M. P.' *Reynolds's Weekly Newspaper*, 1 September 1850, p. 1.

SIR – Some few weeks ago I addressed you in a long letter, which was published in my journal, and which compelled upon you to lend an attentive ear to the demands of the working classes. At that time you were trammelled by the reactionary policy adopted by the wolves-in-sheep's-clothing forming the Executive Committee of the National Parliamentary and Financial Reform Association. Messrs. Arthur Wilkinson, Thomas Prout, and Charles Gilpin, with their coadjutor Mr. Beggs the Secretary, were doing all in their power to make the improvement entirely and purely a middle-class one; and, backed by such men as Tillett of Norwich, Biggs of Leicester, and Parry the barrister – all of whom are fraudulently and systematically opposed to the interests of working classes – the individuals above-mentioned were studying how to render your Association a means of getting themselves or their favourites into Parliament in the next general election. The quarrel they fastened upon me proved in the long run most disastrous to their own policy and ruinous to their selfish interests. By remaining upon the Council and compelling them to bring forward the motion of which they had given notice, and which had my expulsion for its object, I brought matters to an issue. The long smouldering flames of *dissension*³ burst forth – a clash of the antagonistic elements took place – and the result

³ Word obscured by binding.

was the resignation and retirement of the purse-proud Wilkinson, (?)⁴ Prout, the sanctimonious Gilpin, and their Man Friday Beggs. It is a misfortune that Mr. Tillett, whose apparent impertinence and inordinate vanity are so intolerable – Mr. Biggs, who conceals so much hauteur beneath an air of studied urbanity and plausibility – and Mr. Parry, the barrister, who rants and roars in such an uncouth style when denouncing Chartism and the Red Republicanism, — it is a misfortune, I say, that these individuals have not also retired into their native obscurity and ceased to encumber your movement with their most inauspicious help.

They are however too insignificant in social position and too contemptible as politicians to do any positive mischief. The real obstructives have vanished from the *cause*.⁵ Mr. Wilkinson has gone back to his money-grabbing avocations – Mr. Prout to his universal nostrums, Mr. Gilpin to his maudlin and trashy publications – and Mr. Beggs, heaven only knows where. The Council has been re-modelled – or rather re-constructed, upon a somewhat more democratic basis than heretofore. The one guinea qualification has been abolished; and the *elective*⁶ principle substituted. Several working men have thus obtained admission through the portals of the Council-room; and the list of the new Executive Committee contains the name of Mr. Leblond, who is a thorough democrat and social reformer. The proceedings of the first meeting of the newly-constructed Council represented a more democratic aspect than on any previous occasion: and, with the exception of an anti-liberal

⁴ Word obscured by binding.

⁵ Word obscured by binding.

⁶ Word obscured by binding.

and middle- class speech from Mr. Parry, who repudiated the use of the word “democracy” altogether within those walls, the feeling decidedly manifested an improved tone. All the officers of the Association were elected on the occasion; and it must be admitted that none whose *aims*⁷ are objectionable to the working classes have been *appointed*⁸ in connexion with the establishment; while the appointment of so liberal -minded a man as Mr. Hubbersty to the post of Secretary is an incident deserving special mention.

But now comes the question, Sir Joshua, whether with all these emendations in its proceedings and its (?)⁹ your movement can be continued either advantageously or successfully: that is to say, advantageously to the working classes, and successfully in obtaining the measures of reform specified in your programme. For my part, I do not hesitate to declare that your movement, if persevered in on its present basis, will neither produce advantage nor success. To be productive of advantage, your Association must widen its *remit*¹⁰ in order to admit the full amount of those principles that will alone ameliorate the condition of the toiling millions: and to achieve success, you must secure the support of these now oppressed and unrepresented classes. But how can you expect to be supported universally, when you only propose to enfranchise partially? How can you hope to receive the countenance of those whom the benefit (if there be any) of your measures will not reach? Believe me, your Association has not

⁷ Word obscured by binding.

⁸ Word obscured by binding.

⁹ Word obscured by binding.

¹⁰ Word obscured by binding.

won confidence of the masses at present: you must do more than you have already done in order to obtain it; and unless you obtain it, you may spare yourself the trouble of farther agitation.

Any proposal short of Manhood Suffrage will not satisfy the working classes generally. Nor ought they be satisfied with anything savouring of compromise or efficiency. Why should they be content to take anything less than their due? – why should they assent to an instalment of their rights, when they can obtain the whole? The point at issue between the Oligarchy and their Slaves is not one of mere debtor and creditor, where the latter must be content to take any *boon*¹¹ as a perfect god-send: but it is a question between robbers and the robbed – between plunderers and the plundered. If you, then, step in to interfere, you must not be as a mediator suggesting a compromise – but as a judge sternly resolved to see the full measure of justice awarded. And that full measure of justice is *all* of the right – not *some* of the rights – of which the people have been robbed!

How, then, can you widen your basis of action so as to render it advantageous and ensure success? By printing the luminous words *Manhood Suffrage* on the banner, instead of the dingy and deceptive *Household Suffrage*: by insisting that the duration of Parliaments shall be limited to one year, instead of allowing them a three years' licence of irresponsibility and (?)¹² of mischief; – and by enunciating the principle that Members must be paid for their services. With regards to this last suggestion for the emendation of the programme, you

¹¹ Word obscured by binding.

¹² Word obscured by binding.

cannot possibly object to it. The working – men are already members of your *party*¹³ and their speeches and demeanour have shown you how valuable is their aid and how reliable their conduct. But if it be wise and politic that such men should sit at your Council-board, it also becomes wise and politic that they should sit in the House of Commons. To enable them, however, to represent their order in the Legislature, they must be provided with the means of subsistence when they abandon their workshop to take their seat in St. Stephen's. here you have, before your eyes, a practical proof of the excellence and necessity of the principle of Payment of Members. Why not, then, adopt it? – and why not adopt also the other principles to which you have already given your adhesion so far as platform assurances are concerned?

You were recently at a meeting held at the Whittington Club for the purpose of asking the assent of the middle and working – classes to the erection of a monument to the late Sir Robert Peel. To make such a demand of the middle-classes, who have profited by the Free Trade measures of that statesman, is natural enough; but no outrage or insult upon the feelings of the working -classes could possibly be greater than asking them thus to honour the memory of their bitterest, most unrelenting enemy. At that meeting you witnessed a demonstration of the working-class mind: you saw that the sons of toil are no longer to be deluded, hoodwinked, and humbugged by sha friends and mock reformers; - and surely the lesson can not have been lost upon you. Sir Joshua Walmsley, you now stand in a false position and on most ticklish ground. You are afraid of losing the support of a few middle-class me if you throw yourself in

¹³ Word obscured by binding.

the arms of the working-classes. But what is the countenance of a dozen warehousemen in Wood Street, two or three obscure barristers, one or two Common Councilmen, and some few thousands of shopocrats, in comparison with the tremendous power comprised in the aggregate ranks of Labour? The middle-classes as a body are *not* with you: the working-classes as a whole are *not* with you. Nor can you have *both*, by any possible means. You have to decide between them. Make your selection – and do it quickly. To remain hovering between the two, is ludicrous as a spectacle and suicidal as a policy.

The Selfish and Rapacious Oligarchy

Original citation: G.W.M. Reynolds, ‘The Selfish and Rapacious Oligarchy’, *Reynolds’s Weekly Newspaper*, 8 September 1850, p. 1.

Lord John Russell observed in one of the speeches which he delivered last session, “that in this country the meanest individuals had a chance of rising to the highest offices of the State.” This is one of those fallacies which Ministers so often send forth from their glibly speaking tongues, and which are so artfully glossed over with a semblance of truth that the refutation cannot be confined to the simple monosyllabic negative. I shall however prove, in as short a space as possible, the falsehood of the assertion.

The Aristocracy have in reality monopolised all governmental powers and administrative functions, in every department of the State. The Sovereign is a mere puppet in their hands, unable to exercise a single prerogative or perform the simplest act of executive authority without the advice or consent of the Ministers. She is hemmed in all around by a set of aristocratic spies, male and female, and bearing such sounding titles as Mistress of the Robes, Maids of Honour, Bedchamber Women, Lord High Steward, Lord Chamberlain, Master of the Horse, Grand Falconer, Earl Marshal, Groom of the Stole, &c. The Ministers, who make all these appointments and plant their own creatures about the person of the Sovereign, are in their turn the mere agents and tools of the Aristocracy, to which order most of them belong. With a House of Lords consisting entirely of Aristocrats, and possessing the power of *veto* upon any Measure emanating from the Commons, —and

with a House of Commons representing only class-interests and executive privileges, —the Ministers cannot possibly be otherwise than dependent upon that proud, domineering, and selfish Aristocracy. The consequence is that the Aristocracy constitutes, as Ledru-Rollin has so admirably observed, a Joint Stock Company of Kings; and thus the British Empire is ruled, not by one Sovereign, but by an Oligarchy.

And now let us see what amount of power, prerogative, and authority, is vested in the hands of this tyrant Oligarchy. In the first place, as I have already shown, the Crown is in their hands: it is the talisman of all their honours, wealth, and privileges. Secondly, they leave their own House of Lords; and the House of Commons is likewise theirs's, by means of their sons, their relatives, their nominees, and the innumerable place-hunters who find their way into Parliament. Thirdly, the Church is entirely their own, its patronage being in their hands, and the Bishops sitting as legislators in the House of Lords. Fourthly, the Army is the plaything for the scions of the Aristocracy, and is almost exclusively officered by persons on whom they can rely in any emergency. Fifthly, the Navy is in the same condition; and promotion in both services is awarded for political purposes and as a recompense for the avowal of particular opinions. Sixthly, the Judicial Bench and all the Law Departments are filled with the nominees and favourites of the Aristocracy; and the highest honours have invariably been heaped upon those Attorneys-General who have been most active and virulent in prosecuting and persecuting democratic reformers. Seventhly, the Colonies are under the control of the Aristocracy, for whose poor members they furnish places with rich emoluments, and for whose blood-thirsty instincts they afford ample opportunities of gratification and practice in the

form of hangings, shootings, and other diabolical atrocities. Eighthly, the Militia, when I existence, is raised, officered, disciplined, and controlled by the great landlords and the country gentlemen, all of whom are the devoted partisans of the Aristocracy. Ninthly, the Lord Lieutenants and Sheriffs of Counties are appointed through the same all-powerful omnipresent influence. Tenthly, the Unpaid Magistracy, throughout the country, originates ii the same source, and constitutes so monstrous an engine of tyranny that is not to be wondered at if our gaols are constantly swarming with the victims of infamous laws—such as trespassers, poachers, mendicants, vagabonds, vagrants, and all kinds of petty offenders. Eleventhly, the whole Police of the Kingdom is under the thumb of the creatures of the Aristocracy, and can be rendered as available as a standing army for purposes of repression. And twelfthly, the Pension List contains only the names of cormorant Aristocrats, or their scavengers, the power of pecuniary recompense for services of any kind being thus held in the hands of that all-grasping Oligarchy.

Such is the position of this blessed country: and now I ask Lord John Russell to point out the facilities that exist for the meanest individual to raise himself to the highest offices in the State. Let us suppose that a working man distinguishes himself amongst his fellows by evidences of a grand intellect and a brilliant genius: how is he to rise to eminence in the service of his country? Only by the ignominious means. Unless he sells himself to the Aristocracy, he has not the ghost of a chance of elevating his social position. He must adopt their opinions – to write and speak in their favour— vote at elections, if he possess the suffrage, as they dictate – and become a parasite, a lick-spittle, and a sycophant. He must drag himself through the mire

of corruption in order to reach the golden pathways of distinction, rank, and honour. But this is like selling one's soul to Satan in order to reach the acme of ambition: this is trampling all generous feelings and high minded independence under foot, for the purpose of attaining what after all can only be regarded as an ignoble eminence and a tarnished reputation.

If, on the other hand, this talented and aspiring individual pursues an independent course and follows the impulse of his own enlightened and liberal sentiments, he will find ten thousand barriers raised up by aristocratic influence in his way. Let him graduate at the University, and apply for Church preferment, his opinions will be thrown in his teeth, and the idea of appointing a democrat to living would be treated with ridicule, scorn and contempt. Let him ask the Commander-in-Chief for a commission in the Army: and although he may be as talented an engineer as Vauban or as skilful in the art of fortification as Cormontaigne, yet some Lord Noodle or Honourable Thomas Fool will be preferred, simply because the democratic application entertains "opinions of too liberal a character." If he should happen to get a berth as a midshipman in the Navy, and denounce corporal punishment, will he ever be promoted to the rank of lieutenant? Not if he lived for a hundred years and was present at a thousand battles. If he be a barrister, will the Ministry select him to fill the post of Attorney-General, simply on the ground of his great legal knowledge and intellectual attainments? No such thing: he must be a partizan—a thick-and-thin supporter of a particular policy and an exclusive set of opinions; otherwise there is no hope of such elevation for him.

It is well known that birth, money, or interest are the only talismans to distinction in the State or to employment under the

government. To be descended from one of the Norman bandits who came over with William the Conqueror, or from one of the infamous women who were the pensioned harlots of Charles the Second, is a Sure auxiliary to the highest honours and the richest pensions. Countless quarterings upon a shield are better recommendations than all the lights of genius. Wealth is moreover a powerful aid in a country where respectability is measured according to the length of the purse, and where poverty is not only regarded as a crime but actually punishable as such. To possess good interest with a Government official, a Peer, or a Member of Parliament, is likewise an excellent thing: but then to enjoy such patronage and merit such support, all those sacrifices of opinion and of feeling which I have before noticed must be uncompromisingly and unscrupulously made. The man must sink his dignity into the servile parasite, and lose his independence in becoming the abject sycophant.

By rendering birth, money, or interest, the only passports to governmental employment, honour, distinction, and pension, the oligarchy have consolidated their tremendous power. They are enabled to fill up every situation, from that of the Prime Minister down to the lowest Treasury messenger or Somerset House porter, with their own creatures and partizans. A formidable phalanx is thus arrayed, not only against the aspiring ambition of any liberal-minded person, but also against the progress of the liberal cause itself. If a workingman be ever so distinguished for intellectual qualifications, probity of character, and sound practical knowledge, he will find that the profession of democratic opinions will not only prove a barrier to his laudable aspirations, but will also render him a mark for tyranny and an object of persecution. Will the Minister bestow upon him a place in which his talents would

be rendered really available for the service of his country? — will he be recommended as a fitting individual to be placed in the commission of the peace, to be appointed. a Lord - Lieutenant, or to be “pricked for” as Sheriff? I need not pause to answer the question. No: for turn whithersoever we will, we discover the slimy current of aristocratic influence running through the whole social system — branching off into innumerable streams, some wide and deep, others narrow and scarcely perceptible—but all carrying corruption and rottenness throughout our institutions, and poisoning the atmosphere with their noxious exhalations.

How is this dreadful condition of things to be remedied? Only by the people obtaining a full and fair representation in the House of Commons. Within the walls of that branch of the Legislature can the influence of the aristocracy alone be combatted. And this change must take place speedily, or the whole country will be convulsed with agitation. Discontent is already wide spread: it is increasing—it is penetrating into places where it was not experienced before—it is finding oral expression where it was never acknowledged until now. The Oligarchy alone are contented: and the mere circumstance of their satisfaction is a proof that they have succeeded to their heart’s content in trampling upon the rest of the community. The middle-classes are crying out in all directions: they are overwhelmed with taxation: and bankruptcies, protested bills, and stagnant markets are terrible alarums to arouse even the heaviest sleepers from their lethargy. As for the working-classes, *they* are well nigh goaded to desperation by the stern denial of their rights, by the state of bondage in which they are held, and by the grinding tyranny of Capital, Competition, and Landlordism. Can such a system last? It is impossible. The

Oligarchy must give way – they must allow a sentiment of prudence, if they are incapable of a more generous feeling, to triumph over their selfishness; and they must whisper in the ears of the Ministers, who are their tools and agents, that it is becoming unsafe to postpone those measures of reform which the masses of the population seem determined to have.

Political Rights and Social Reforms

Original citation:

G.W.M. Reynolds, 'Political Rights and Social Reforms',
Reynolds's Weekly Newspaper, 15 September 1850, p. 1.

No system of society can be good, under which some men revel in every luxury and others starve. No government can be just, which abstains from the enactment of measures calculated to take away the surplus wealth from the enriched few and distributes it amongst the necessitous many. No individual should be allowed the enjoyment of luxuries, until all men in the community have been assured necessities. In fact, no one should be permitted to have butter upon his bread, so long as a single person remains without bread at all. When the rich man dines sumptuously and the poor man has no dinner whatsoever, the latter's share of the earth's produce has been plundered from him to place upon the table of the former.

These are axioms which are irrefragable. They defy the possibility of controversion. Working men should study them well: they should commit to memory, and repeat them to their fellow-labourers whenever an opportunity serves. It is only by constantly dwelling upon their wrongs, that they will arrive at a thorough understanding of their rights.

Selfish aristocrats, unprincipled legislators, and hire-ling journalists declare that the working-classes have no rights at all. Are the working classes contented with this arrogant denial of their privileges as human beings?—will they be contented to remain for ever enslaved? But they will be told on the other hand that they are not enslaved. Who will tell them this? Why, those who enslave them, or who are interested in the

perpetuation of their slavery. But how are they enslaved? By being made the “hewers of wood and drawers of water” for a class of persons who do not work at all, but who will live upon the labour of others. Those who thus live idly are the enslavers: those who thus work incessantly, are the enslaved. The industrious millions of this country are enslaved in the warehouse, the factory, and the fields: they are enslaved as domestic servants, as soldiers, as sailors;—they are enslaved wherever they do anything that is useful and necessary for a set of idlers who do nothing that is useful and necessary at all.

It is the veriest and most abject slavery for a man to be compelled to obey laws in the making of which he has no voice; or to pay taxes in the granting of which he has no discretion. It is the vilest and most cruel slavery for a man to produce by his industry all the luxuries of life, while he remains unable to procure the necessaries. Yet such is the condition of the working-man in this country. He is not allowed to vote in the election of that Legislature which makes the laws which he is bound to obey, and levies the taxes which he is forced to pay. He does not enjoy the first fruits of his own industry: for if he rears a melon and a potato on a piece of ground, the idler comes and takes the luscious fruit and leaves him the scanty vegetable. This, then, is slavery: and the working – man is a grovelling, wretched slave.

But there is a remedy for the miserable condition in which the sons and daughters of toil have languished so long and are languishing now. They must obtain their political right and social reforms will immediately follow. What are political rights?—what are the requisite social reforms?

By the former is meant the equal enjoyment of all rights on the part of every member of the community, so that no

individual shall possess a right from the exercise of which another is excluded. Such an exclusive right is a privilege: and there should be no privileges whatsoever. Every individual, on arriving at the age of manhood, should enter upon the rights, as he is liable to the duties of a citizen. He should be enabled to vote for the election of every representative, officer, or functionary who can in any way affect his interests. If there be five millions of male adults in the community, it is a gross tyranny for only one million of these men to choose the representatives who are to make the laws and levy the taxes for the whole of that community. It is this system which has enabled the rich in this country to become so rich, and has compelled the poor to remain so poor. But no one ought to be richer than another; and if those working men who have now no voice in the election of the national representatives, were to possess that voice, there would be no such thing as pauperism at all in the country.

By social reform is meant the reconstruction of society on a basis that would ensure the result just named. If the working classes possessed political rights, they would be enabled to influence the general elections in such a manner that their own interests would obtain sufficient representation in the House of Commons. Such representation would lead to those changes that are necessary to protect Labour from being made the source of wealth and luxury to those who do not labour at all. The working man would enjoy the fruits of his own industry, and not have to surrender to them up to idlers and drones. If he reared the melon and the potato, he would be sure to enjoy the melon. With a proper system of social reform, there would be no idlers, beggars, no paupers, no sinecurists, no pensioners. Each individual would do his fair amount of work, in whatever

department or branch of industry, science, or art, he was most efficient; and by this universality of occupation, there would be due leisure for all to improve and recreate themselves. Under the present system, the rich man is idle all day, and the working man *toils* all day. But between the two there is only one day's labour: and consequently if they took their fair share, there would only be half a day's toil for each. Again, under the present system, the rich man devours all the luxuries, while the working man can scarcely obtain the necessities of life; social reform would heap up all those luxuries and all those necessities upon one table, and divide the aggregate mass equally between the two. But in this case, both must labour for the bread which they eat.

Now, then, I ask the working-man whether it be not worthwhile to struggle for those political rights which can alone lead to these grand social reforms? If the individual to whom I put the question, really loves his wife and children, he should endeavour to improve their condition. Look at the proud and rich one's carriage dashing by, with the lady so elegantly dressed, and the children so beautifully apparelled! They are gay, happy, and smiling: they know that when they return home, a well-spread table will be prepared for them. Nor have they any care for the morrow: their fortune in this life is assured. Now, working-man, when you avert your eyes from that spectacle and your gaze settles upon your own wife, with her scant clothing and her wan features, and upon your poor little children with their bare feet and their famished countenances,—and when you reflect that although you may have a morsel of bread to give them to-day, they may be starving, dying, perishing with want before your eyes to-morrow,—what must your feelings be? Do not tell me that you

don't envy the happy family that dashed by just now in that beautiful carriage. I say you *do* envy them—you *must* envy them: it is human nature to envy them—and moreover, you are bound to envy them for the sake of your dear wife and you poor little children. But does the thought strike you, my friend, that if you choose, you could achieve for yourself all you envy in others? Ah! now I see you opening your eyes wide and pricking up your ears, and flinging a glance of ineffable fondness upon your pale wife and wan cheeked children, while from the depths of your soul ascends the fervid question—"Oh, if this could indeed be!" But I tell you again, that it *can* be—that it *may* be—that it *must* be. The consummation is in your own hands. Demand your political rights: insist upon having them. Agitate with all your moral strength until they are conceded. And when you have obtained them, I promise you that they will lead to those social reforms of which I have been speaking, and which will bring back the roses to the cheek of that wife of yours, and plant the hues of health and imprint the smiles of happiness upon the countenances of your children. Aye, and more—they shall be as well fed and as well clothed as that family whom you ere now envied as you beheld them dashing past in their carriage.

A Few Words to the Working Classes

Original citation:

G.W.M. Reynolds, ‘Few Words to the Working Classes’
Reynolds’s Weekly Newspaper, 22 September 1850, p. 1.

“A fair day’s wage for a fair day’s work,” is a sentence often quoted by even honest-intentioned and well – meaning persons. Working men are accustomed to proclaim it as the sum-total of all their demands, *ideas*,¹⁴ and expectations; and the champions of the industrial classes are apt to hold it out as expressive of the *most*¹⁵ to be gained by agitation. But that sentence could never be quoted as a maxim: nor should it form the portion of an honest and liberal political creed. The maxim of “a fair day’s wage for a fair day’s work” is emblematical of serfdom and slavery. It pre-supposes the presence of a class who work for another class who pay wages for the work done: it admits the division of the community into two sections – one toiling for pay, and the other living upon the produce and profits of that toil. For so long as such distinctions and divisions exist, must the class that is hired to be the slaves and the bondsmen of the class that hires.

The idea of “a fair day’s wage for a fair day’s work,” as merely suggestive, therefore, of an improvement upon the present system, which gives a beggarly pittance for an unconscionable amount of labour: but that sentence must not be taken either as a standard maxim, or as the sum-total of Labour’s wants and aspirations. Why should one man be

¹⁴ Word obscured by binding.

¹⁵ Word obscured by binding.

permitted to possess an enormous estate, or an immense fortune, while another man has neither an inch of ground to call his own nor a penny in his purse? So long as these tremendous contrasts are allowed to exist, the poor man must of necessity toil for the rich one, and the rich one can make a serf and slave of the wretched pauper. A proper social system would equalise all conditions by bestowing upon every individual his fair share of the earth's produce and enabling all men to enjoy the fruits of their own labour.

Take the richest Duchess and the poorest needle-woman, and inquire wherefore the former is so happy and prosperous and the latter so miserable and so unfortunate: it is through no particular merit on the part of the former, nor any special fault on the part of the latter. The accident of birth has created the position of each. Yet the Duchess may be a most immoral woman, and the seamstress a pattern of virtue: society takes no notice of the matter, and there is no law to compel them change places with each other. Is it not, then, revolting to common sense and repugnant to every idea of justice and humanity, that one person should be born to be rich and another to be poor – the former to be happy, and the latter to be miserable? Is it not a *brutal*¹⁶ and execrable system of society which prepares a bed of down for the birth of one babe, and a heap of straw for the reception of another? Is it not a cruel and murderous state of things, when the world is made a paradise for one person and a pandemonium for another? But when churchmen tell us that all this is the dispensation of Providence, I say that they utter a tremendous falsehood and are guilty of a terrific blasphemy against the wisdom, the justice, and the mercy of the Almighty.

¹⁶ Word obscured by binding.

A good parent will not heap all possible favours upon one of his children, and condemn the rest to rags, beggary, and heart-breaking afflictions. Such a parent would be a detestable monster. Is God, then, less just than man? No: let the declaimers from the pulpit preach what they will, they only cumulate impiety upon impiety and heap blasphemy upon blasphemy when they attribute to the dispensation of heaven the inequalities, wrongs, miseries, and crimes which belong to the present social system.

The Almighty gave the whole world to the human family, and endowed the soil with a fecundity adequate for the wants of the millions of beings who were destined from the first to occupy the earth. The infinite varieties of food which the land yields or which human skill may make from the produce of the soil, prove that the supreme artificer intended every individual to enjoy luxuries as well as necessities. But by degrees the beneficent intentions of heaven have been utterly perverted and frustrated by the wickedness, rapacity, and injustice of man. The wise arrangements which marked the beginning of things, has been superseded by a vile social system. The land has been taken away from the human family generally and monopolised by a few; and it now remains locked up in the hands of a small minority, to the utter exclusion of the immense majority of mankind. Those few who have thus obtained possession of the heritage of the whole human race, not only make all kinds of arbitrary laws to protect themselves in the enjoyment of their monopoly, but dare to attribute to heaven all the inequalities and miseries which that very monopoly has introduced into the social system.

I wish the working classes to understand well, and weigh thoroughly, the fact that they are the slaves and serfs of the

oligarchy; and that they can never emancipate themselves from bondage until they acquire those political rights which must lead to the necessary social reforms. I wish every poor man's wife to say to her husband, "There must be something very wrong that state of things which compels you to work from morning to night for a few shillings a week, while your employer who does not work at all spends his thousands of pounds a year." I wish every poor man to say to his children, the moment they are old enough to understand him, "My father was a slave, and I am a slave: but do you endeavour to become free, not only for your own sake but also for the sake of those who shall come after you." In fine, I wish the working classes generally to ponder and reflect more than they have hitherto been accustomed to do, upon those glaring inequalities and flagrant contrasts which our social system everywhere presents to their view. By studying these remarkable phases and inquiring into their origin and nature, the working man will soon comprehend where the rottenness of the system exists and what the remedy should be.

Here is a man with a hundred thousand pounds a year – and there is a man with seven shillings a week. Here is a man with five hundred acres of land – and there is a man who cannot take up a handful of dust from the road and call it his own. Here is a man who owns an entire forest – and there is a man now in gaol for cutting a twig off one of the trees. Here is a man who possesses a thousand head of cattle – and here is a man on the treadmill for catching a hare. Here is a lord who, though in a lunatic-asylum, can vote by proxy in the Upper House – and there is an intelligent working man who has not any kind of vote at all.

These are some of the contrasts which I am desirous to keep constantly before the eyes of the working classes. They speak volumes relative to the existing social system: they show that class-legislation and oligarchical rule have enabled the *few* to take excellent care of themselves, while the *many* are doomed to crushing toil ceaseless misery, and bitter oppression.

The British Aristocracy have displayed the most singular cunning and a remarkable ingenuity in using the middle classes as their tools and making the working classes their slaves. While accomplishing this double purpose they have induced the middle classes to believe that *they* are the veritable Commons who hold the purse-strings of the nation, and they have assured the working-classes that they are the happiest, freest, and most prosperous people on the face of the earth. The Aristocracy have likewise taken care to patronise all writers of what they are pleased to term “national songs” – that is to say, those fulsome, boastful, braggart doggrels which flatter the vanity of silly people and induce tipplers to be uproarious in pot - house parlours and tap-rooms. “Britons never, never shall be slaves,” “the land of the free,” and all this kind of nonsense and garbage have become *popularised* by means of the aristocratic patronage bestowed upon the disgusting trash; and the same song of “God save the King” was applied, without the least discrimination, to the mad and blood-thirsty George III, the infamous voluptuary and wife – murderer George IV, and the poor silly fool William IV. The influence of “national songs” and “popular airs” upon the minds of the masses is immense: but if all those compositions be scrutinized, they will be found to contain the servile, slavish, grovelling sentiments which foster the belief that Britons are really free and that our “glorious constitution” is the best in the whole world.

The working classes should discourage all songs, airs, glees, and ballads which in any way help the cause of tyranny and oppression. They should discountenance everything which tends to rivet the chains of their bondage; and they should put down all braggadocio about those “blessed institutions” which in reality need so much radical reform. They should avoid all fawning and servility towards those who are falsely called their “superiors;” and they should not gratify a lord’s vanity by staring at him nor his arrogant presumption by touching their hats to him. At public meetings the working classes should positively and decidedly refuse a hearing to those persons whom they know to be antagonistic to their interests: they must not allow themselves to be gulled, duped, and deceived by wolves in sheep’s clothing. Hitherto they have been far too lenient in this respect: they have allowed sanctimonious humbugs or political cheats to enunciate their doctrines without marked reproof, and the natural inference has been that the speakers represented the feeling of the assembly. But, in future, at all public meetings called for the discussion of questions in which the working classes are interested, let any man who dares to proclaim a single sentiment antagonistic to the cause of the masses, be hissed from the scene. This is the only way to bring mock-reformers and sham – liberals to their senses. It is utterly preposterous – indeed, it is a flagrant insult – to call the working classes together ostensibly to discuss their grievances, and then to tell them that they are not to have their own way in pointing out the remedy, but must be content with whatever these political quacks choose to give them. The working classes must distinguish between their real and their pretended friends: the former speak openly and without

disguise – the latter are full of reservations, compromises, and expedients.

Patricians and Plebeians

Original citation: G.W.M. Reynolds, 'Patricians and Plebeians', *Reynolds's Weekly Newspaper*, 29 September 1850, p. 1.

The presence of an hereditary aristocracy in a country is so formidable a barrier to political progress and social reform. The very conditions of its existence are hostile to civilisation and improvement. The institution was founded in ages of barbarism, of oppression, and of blood, and cannot possibly be compatible with modern wants, interests, and notions. The very fact of its antiquity is reason for its annihilation: it is effete—emasculated—worn-out. Nothing that originated in the gloom of barbarian times can be fitted for the intellectual condition of mankind at the present day. The offspring of darkness is out of place in the sphere of light. An institution which sprang up in an age when men believed in witches and burnt those who were accused of witchcraft—when the efficacy and power of charms, amulets, enchantments, talismans, and spells were unquestioned—and when the basest superstitions led to the most appalling cruelties, an institution which took its birth at such a period, can scarcely be suitable for the age of steam, gas, railways, and electric telegraphs.

It is quite clear that the existence of a favoured class in a community is an eye-sore to the great mass that is, unfavoured. The fact of a patrician and a plebeian order *standing*¹⁷ in presence of each other is sufficient to breed disagreement, give rise to agitation, and eventually produce convulsion. Thus,

¹⁷ Word obscured by binding.

since the time of William the Conqueror, England has had her eight civil wars and her rebellions. The existence of two distinct grades in any country cannot possibly fail to produce antagonism, and lead to collision. Because it is impossible that one class can be favoured otherwise than to the prejudice of the other class. If A be the patrician and B the plebeian, if the title of nobility throws B's humble name into the *shade*:¹⁸ A is courted and looked up to because he is a lord while B is lost amongst the masses of the people. Again, if A have an hereditary estate of one thousand acres and B has got no land at all, A has in reality monopolised the five hundred acres which properly and rightly belong to B. In fact, whatever honour A enjoys it is only through the contrast afforded by B's humiliation: whatever excess of wealth A possesses, is obtained by robbing B of what is justly his due;—and whatever *rights* A arrogates to himself, can only be based on the *wrongs* endured by B.

If men are equal in the eyes of heaven: all, according to the divine intentions, have the same rights, the same vested interests, the same importance in the world, the same consequence in society. Wherever one class enjoys hereditary privileges, it can only be by an invasion of the rights of the rest of the community. The obtaining of such hereditary privileges must have been characterised by usurpation: they never were voluntarily conceded by the unfavoured masses; —and as the privileged order necessarily constitutes the *minority* of the country, its founders must have set the numerical majority at defiance. Consequently, however much the time and the patient endurance of the masses have seemed to sanction the

¹⁸ Word obscured by binding.

existence of a privileged class its origin is none the less traceable to usurpation, violence, plunder, and injustice.

These are incontrovertible truths. Because it cannot be supposed for a moment that the families of the Smiths, the Browns, the Greens, the Thompsons, and the Robinsons, would ever of their own accord consent to become the serfs and slaves of the families of the (?),¹⁹ the Cavendishes, the Beauclerks, the Haywards, and the Russells. The first batch of families have never said, "We consent to be stigmatized as *plebian*," so that the second batch of families might say, "And we shall therefore ennoble ourselves with the distinction of *patrician*." And therefore, if this (?)²⁰ batch of families did, at any period of the nation's history, take unto themselves rights, privileges, or distinctions, without the consent of the aforementioned batch of families, such a course was nothing more or less than usurpation, plunder, violence, and fraud.

Even supposing that a thousand years ago, the family of the Smiths said to the family of the Cavendishes, "*You shall be noble, and we will be peasants,*"²¹ *you shall be patrician, and we will be plebians, you shall have immense estates, and we will have little or nothing; you shall be the masters, and we will be the slaves; you shall enjoy all the luxuries of life, and we will humbly content ourselves with the barest necessities; you shall make the laws, and we will obey them; you shall impose taxes, and we will pay them; you shall do as you like in all respects, and we will not dispute your good will and pleasure:*" suppose I say, that a thousand years ago the Smiths did address the

¹⁹ Word obscured by binding.

²⁰ Word obscured by binding.

²¹ Word obscured by binding but looks like 'peasants'.

Cavendishes in these servile, grovelling, disgustingly fulsome terms, it by no means follows that the present descendants of those Smiths should feel disposed to ratify the infamous bargain with the present descendants of those Cavendishes. A thousand years have passed away, and new Smiths and new Cavendishes stand in the presence of each other to make a new bargain. It would rightly serve the Cavendishes if the Smiths now said to them, "*Our turn is now; you have lorded it long enough and we must change places*"— but inasmuch as I do not admit the right of any one race to enslave another, no matter what the circumstances may be, I cannot recommend the Smiths to adopt measures of retribution. But I do say—and aver it boldly and fearlessly—that the Smiths should say to the Cavendishes, "*The bargain of antiquity exists no longer: we refuse to confirming the compelling servile policy of our ancestors; and henceforth, we will not be your slaves, your instruments, and your tools.*" In plain terms, the plebian orders should tell the patricians, that the time has now come for the annihilation of social distinctions, and that, letting bye-gones be by-gones, it will be much better for all members of the community to start, from a given day, *supporting*²² of general equality.

Let us suppose that it were deemed advisable to maintain aristocratic distinctions and titles of nobility, in order to confer them as rewards upon those men who (?)²³ of the State. Granting, then, for a moment, (and only for a moment) that some statesman, or some general, some admiral or some scientific individual, deserves to be created a Duke or a

²² Word obscured by binding.

²³ Word obscured by binding.

Marquis, it is preposterous to make the distinction hereditary in his family. If the Great Duke of Marlborough really merited his dukedom, well and good: but for what earthly reason should it descend to his posterity? If the Duke of Wellington merited his dukedom, why should it be inherited by his son? According to the hereditary principle, a clever man may be succeeded in his dukedom by a fool, a brave man by a coward, a man of exemplary character by a detestable sensualist. And then let it be considered to what scandalous and shameful uses this principle of an hereditary peerage may be turned by vile Sovereigns and dishonest Ministers. How is it that England is saddled with the expense and cursed by the influence of the ducal broods of Richmond, Grafton, Cleveland, and St. Albans? Because the ancestresses of these *august* families were filthy prostitutes and abandoned harlots who sold their charms for gold. What origin can be more disgraceful—more disgusting? The bearers of those titles, their sons and their relatives, ought all to blush when they look honest *untitled* citizens in the face. But, the peerage has not only been turned to these loathsome, brothel-like purposes: it has been made the means of recompensing those persons who have shown themselves the bitterest, most inveterate enemies of the popular cause. A ferocious and bloody-minded Attorney-general, like Scarlett, has ever been sure to reach the peerage. Again, the moneygrubber of the City, who has accumulated immense wealth by the financial thimble-rig called “banking,” is raised to the peerage; and this honour (if an honour it be) is to descend to his sons and grandsons, just because he himself happened to be a rich man! Then there is the wholesale slaughterer of his species—the man who, under the sounding name of “General,” and with the miserable pretext of “duty to his country,” leads a

vast army to butchery and murder, rapine and plunder, horror and, bloodshed, —*this* man also, I say, is recompensed with a peerage; and his sons, grandsons, and great-grandsons are to inherit the title and the pension—merely, forsooth, because their ancestor was a pitiless, remorseless, inhuman slaughterer! And, lastly, there are those pliant, ductile, and subservient Members of the House of Commons, who have always voted with one particular party throughout a long career of political prostitution, and whose “consistency,” as this disgustingly selfish: servility is called, must be rewarded with the peerage. And *their* sons, grandsons, and sub-sequent descendants are to inherit and enjoy this peerage simply because their ancestor was an unprincipled timeserver—a base hanger-on of a particular party—a counterfeit, an impostor, a cheat of the first water!

An hereditary peerage must be necessarily associated with the principles of primogeniture, entail, and all the infamous laws which lock up the land in the possession of a few families. The eldest son must be grandly provided for: and, as a matter of course, all the younger sons must be foisted upon the public purse in some way or another. Thus, while we have laws empowering the police to arrest obtrusive mendicants in the streets, we are compelled to tolerate and pay for the maintenance of those equally sturdy beggars and able-bodied paupers - who are the offshoots of the hereditary aristocracy. A pension for Lord Thomas This—a sinecure for Lord George That—a lucrative post for the Honourable Mr. The Other, — these are the genteel robberies practised upon the public—this is the refined and fashionable system of wholesale marauding adopted by the noble bandits of Belgravia. The hereditary peerage is consequently backed up by numberless expensive

institutions, maintained wholly and solely for the purpose of affording incomes to those younger scions of the aristocracy whom the law of primogeniture throws in utter dependence upon the public purse.

The existence of an hereditary aristocracy is therefore not only a flagrant injustice towards the great mass of the community, but its influence is demoralizing and pernicious to a degree. In England it is the fountain of nine-tenths of the evils and abuses which curse the land. It is the exclusive privileges, the greedy rapacity, the despicable meanness, the vested interests, and the all grasping character, of this hereditary aristocracy which render the taxation so enormous and keep the millions in such dire penury. But never, never shall we get rid of this shoal of idle cormorants and indolent drones, until we obtain a full and fair representation of the whole people in the House of Commons. If every male adult had a vote, and if this principle of Manhood Suffrage were properly protected and aided by the other grand accessories so often pointed out by democratic reformers, the Hereditary Aristocracy would not exist another twelvemonth. They would perish of pure inanition—they would vanish promptly and imperceptibly from the scene; and the country would be relieved, quietly and without violence—but by purely moral means—of the most colossal tyranny that ever human infamy piled up, or that ever human patience endured.

The Manchester School of Political Economists

Original citation: G.W.M. Reynolds,
'The Manchester School of Political Economists', *Reynolds's
Weekly Newspaper*, 6 October 1850, p. 1.

It would take but a small amount of argument to show that the policy of the Manchester School is the most selfish, the most sordid, and the most narrow minded that ever was put forward under the fair semblance of Liberalism. Messrs. Cobden, Bright, and Co., may have succeeded in rendering themselves very popular with a certain class of the community: but this class assuredly us not, nor ought to be, the working class; for those gentlemen have in reality been the bitter enemies of the industrial millions. It is puerile and childish to talk of the combinations made by masters in this district and the other district to keep down wages when the whole policy of the Manchester School has been nothing less than a tremendous crusade against the entire earnings of all classes and descriptions of working men throughout the whole length and breadth of the land. It is high time that such an atrocious policy should be thoroughly unmasked; and I will now see if I cannot convince the industrial classes that they have nothing to hope, but everything to fear, from Cobden, Bright, and their colleagues.

In the first place, when was it that these worthies discovered how terrible oppressive the Corn Laws were? Not while merely working men were starving with low wages and high-priced provisions: but when the pressure, arising from the influence of those laws, reached the manufacturers themselves. Then was it that Cobden and Bright started up into full vitality, and

constructed their system of agitation. They were not animated by the honest and disinterested purpose of supplying the working – classes with plenty of food at a cheap rate: but they foresaw that the repeal of the Corn Laws and the establishment of *their* scheme of Free Trade would not only relieve the burthens pressing upon the manufacturing interest, but also create an increased demand for manufactured produce. To sustain manufactures, then, was to augment their own profits and ensure the more rapid accumulation of their fortunes.

As a matter of course, this selfish policy could not be carried into effect without producing a reduction in the price of provisions. But the men of Manchester School already calculated upon a reduction of the wages of labour, well knowing that such must be the inevitable result of their measures. There is always a tacit combination existing amongst employers to keep down the wages of the employed: this understanding may not be entered into verbally, much less by a general written compact; - it may not even be expressed, when a number of employers are in conversation together. But it does not the less exist for all that: it exists as an usage, and because self-interest prompts it. It is, as Adam Smith says, “the natural state of things, which nobody ever hears of.” It results, in fact, amongst the whole mass of employers, from the unconquerable desire of every single individual belonging to that mass, to get as much work done at as low a rate as possible. And every available excuse is made for putting on the screw with regard to wages. The cheapness of provisions has therefore been seized upon as such an excuse; and this was what the Manchester economists shrewdly foresaw. Moreover, their conduct relative to the Ten Hours’ Bill incontestably proves that their policy has all along been measured by their

own peculiar interests, and not dictated by any affection for the slaves in their employment or for the toiling bondsmen of Great Britain generally.

It may be urged in opposition to some of my observations, that the markets are now active, the labouring classes generally employed, and wages pretty good. But, even for a moment admitting such to be the fact, is this prosperity positive or comparative? – is it permanent or temporary? It is only comparative – and it is only temporary. It is comparative, when considered in reference to the frightful distress which reigned in the country for the few preceding years: it is only a partial gleaming succeeding a night of blackest darkness, and therefore seeming by the contrast somewhat brighter than it actually is. And it is only temporary – a mere spurt easily accounted for. In the first place let it be remembered that after a long period of stagnation in manufactures, there must be a little bustle in order to replenish the warehouses which have been slowly and insensibly emptying themselves during that interval: but when gorged again, another lull must come. In the second place, be it recollected that during the year 1849, upwards of ten million quarters of corn were imported into this country from foreign parts; and how is this amount of grain being paid for? Not in gold – because at the same time that the corn was pouring in, so also did the gold. This gold was the price paid for our exports – the remittances, in fact, from abroad; and therefore our exports exceeded our imports. But how, then, was the corn paid for? Why, in manufactured produce; and hence the activity in the manufacturing districts.

It may now be urged that we shall continue to import the same quantity of corn every year, and that as this corn is paid for in manufactured produce, the same activities at present must

continue to prevail in the manufacturing districts. But this hope cannot be fulfilled. The immense quantities of corn imported last year, are not yet consumed: the prices at Mark-lane prove this fact. Whatever corn is now imported will be less in quantity and less in price: consequently there will be a diminished amount of manufactured produce needed to pay for those imports. I therefore insist that the present activity in the manufacturing districts, whatever it may be, is only temporary.

But let us test the vaunted prosperity at the present moment. It must be judged by the consumption of the necessities of life – by the number of paupers – and by the statistics of crime. The speculators in Mincing-lane have found that the consumption of sugar has been sensibly decreasing within the last few months: the speculators in Mark-lane have made the same discovery with regard to corn and flour. There has likewise been a decrease in the consumption of animal food, tea, cocoa, tallow (for candles and soap), and other articles belonging to the necessities of life. Then, with regard to pauperism, I find that despite of the immense clearance made by emigration amongst the working-classes there are upwards of 150,000 more paupers at this moment in the country than there were during the distressed periods of 1847-8. And lastly, with regard to crime, this goes on increasing – increasing fearfully; and its chronicles show that the increase arises from misery and distress.

Now, then, what becomes of the boasted prosperity of the country at the present moment? I have shown that which may exist, is merely comparative, and that it is also merely a temporary briskness: and I have shown likewise that it is really very trivial and slight, and affords subject for the gravest misgivings instead of the most insolent boastings. I am not to

be told that the country is prosperous, because some of the thousands who were lately out of work, are now in work: I am not to be made to believe that wages are good because just for a moment an agricultural labourer is getting 9s. a-week, or a mechanic 15s. a – week. I want to know whether the employment is permanent, and whether the wages are adequate. I have shown that a continuous of employment is not to be relied upon, and proves that the decrease in the articles of consumption proves the wages to be insufficient: and in addition to those facts, I adduce the increase of pauperism and of crime to prove that the country is *not* in a prosperous condition – nor anything like it.

While Messrs. Cobden and Bright put forward what are called their “statesman-like views,” I content myself with offering my humble opinions and deferential views to the consideration of the working-classes. I am glad that the pseudo-philosophers of the Manchester School agitated for the miserable reformatory pittance which they have chosen to call by the sounding name of Free Trade, but which their measure is as much entitled to bear as Don Quixote was justified in assuming the distinction of Knight when dubbed by the ale-house landlord. I am glad, I say, because the repeal of the Corn Laws was a blow at the huge monopoly of the land – a blow, too, at that arrogant, insolent, rapacious, heartless Aristocracy under whose iron sway the nation groans. But I do not give Messrs. Cobden and Bright the credit of having done this amount of good with an honest, conscientious, and manly motive: they would not have done it if they could have helped it; - but in playing the game for their own peculiar interests, they naturally and necessarily struck at the interests of the other people. If they were real Free Traders, in the sense that I am a

Free Trader, they would have annihilated the Custom House and Excise at once – and they would have suffered their liberality in political-economy to infuse itself into matters purely political and social by insisting that all men should have equal rights as citizens.

Universal Suffrage

Original citation: G.W.M. Reynolds, ‘Universal Suffrage’
Reynolds's Weekly Newspaper, 13 October 1850, p. 1.

The struggle that the working classes have to carry on, is for Universal Suffrage, protected and rendered efficient for all good purposes by the accessory principles so often set forth. No measure of reform that does not boldly and honestly include Universal Suffrage, should satisfy the toiling millions: no man who dares to offer any programme excluding Universal Suffrage, should receive any countenance or support. The working classes will stultify themselves in respect to all their past exertions, and compromise themselves for any future agitation, if they accept for the present any set of propositions at the head of which they do not find the words “Universal Suffrage.”

It is not to gratify the personal vanity of any individual that I enjoin him to obtain as soon as he can the right of voting: but it is that he may be enabled to effect some good by the exercise of that right when he obtains it. I do not want him to struggle for a mere abstract honour or distinction, and be able to say simply, “I have got a vote and will use it to benefit my country.” For the right of voting will become the means of enabling the masses to work out those grand reforms which the privileged orders will never concede, and to accomplish those social ameliorations which a mere section of the community can never achieve nor carry out. It is absolutely necessary, therefore, that the extension of the elective franchise should be universal, and not partial: that is to say, it should include all males of twenty-one years of age. A measure which aims at

the enfranchisement of some, and not of all, is a flagrant injustice – a tyranny – a robbery, towards those who are to be excluded. It is an injustice, because all men should have an equal voice in electing the representatives who make the laws and levy the taxes: it is a tyranny, because no man having a vote is justified in claiming the obedience of the man who has no vote to the institutions which the voice of the former has helped to raise up: -and it is a robbery, because to perpetuate the exclusion of any individual from his natural rights is to rob him of those rights.

If a sick man, whose body is a mass of foul corruption, sends for a physician, he does not expect to be told that the doctor has the power to cure him wholly, but will only consent to cure him partially. He looks for a complete and radical cure at the physician's hands, seeing that the said physician possesses the means and is well acquainted with the nature of the remedy required. The illustration applies to the body politic. It is a mass of rottenness and corruption: the only remedy is to be found in Universal Suffrage, accompanied by certain auxiliary principles; - and if any political doctor comes forward and advocates a mode of treatment which will only effect a partial and not a radical change, he should be treated as a quack or a dishonest practitioner.

What has been the cause of the wide-spread misery existing in the country? Class-legislation. And whence have arisen the power and privilege of class-legislation? From the circumstance that only a very small portion of the community has been represented. It therefore follows that wherever the representation is only partial, there will necessarily be class – legislation. The class which is represented will always be enabled to take better care of itself than the class which is

unrepresented: the former will thrive and prosper, while the latter goes to the wall. Besides, it is in the nature of man to study his own selfish interests in preference to those of his neighbour; and hence will the class possessing power always aim at enslaving the class which possesses no power at all. The only way, then, to prevent the possibility of class-legislation, is to equalize all classes by giving unto every man the same right of representation. And this can be effected by no other means than Universal Suffrage.

Great Britain and Ireland have been governed by the Aristocracy alone – and the results have been the aggrandizement of the few and the wretchedness of the Aristocracy and the Middle Class conjointly – the results are precisely the same. The infusion of the Working Class spirit into the representation is absolutely necessary to alter this scandalous condition of things and at least counteract the rapacity, avarice, and greed of the other two Classes. But this infusion can only be effected by means of Universal Suffrage.

If there be a partial extension of the franchise, the result would be to throw all power into the hands of the Middle Class. It would strike a blow at the power of the aristocracy on the one hand: but it would produce no benefit to the Working Class on the other. Such a partial extension would only lead to a change of masters for the industrial community: instead of being bondsmen to the Aristocracy, they would become bondsmen to the Moneyocracy. They have therefore no interest in agitating for a partial extension of the suffrage. But if they had Universal Suffrage, the result would be to release them from any kind of bondage to either the Aristocracy or the Moneyocracy; and therefore they must agitate for Universal Suffrage, whole and entire.

The present system compels the masses to groan under the tyranny of the Aristocracy: a partial extension of the suffrage would hand them over to the tender mercies of the men of the Manchester School. With the present system, the Whigs or Tories, who are nothing more nor less than the two sections into which the whole Aristocracy is divided, administer the affairs of the country by turns: with a partial extension of the suffrage, the Cobden and Bright party would inevitably be called upon by a majority of the House of Commons to take the helm of government. Would such a change benefit the Working Classes? No: it would only perpetuate their serfdom and misery under another set of taskmasters. My strictures of last week upon the policy of the Manchester School were to prepare my readers for the present article, in which I hope to convince them that the Working Class has nothing more to expect at the hands of these political economists than at those of the Aristocracy. The toiling millions may as well have the undisguised wolf to govern them, as the wolf in sheep's clothing. Do they want a specimen of the treatment which they might expect from the men of the Manchester School? Let them look at the Ten Hours' Bill – let them peruse Mr. Bright's atrocious speech relative to the journeymen-bakers – let them contemplate the whole policy of the champions of the manufacturing interests. The wretched humbug of the Peace Congress is only an insidious move to get the continental nations deprived of their arms – an easy apology and excuse for taking away their weapons from the brave proletarians of the European countries, - so that when the lion is robbed of his claws and his teeth, he may the more easily be subdued. In England we have an unarmed people in the presence of an armed government; and consequently the government is

omnipotent. Messrs. Cobden, Bright, and Co., want to reduce the continental nations to the same predicament; and then of course “the cause of order” will progress from the Seine to the Danube, and from the Baltic to the Mediterranean, in a manner calculated to throw even the Editor of the *Times* into complete ecstasies.

Now, then, will the Working Class consent to struggle for that partial extension of the franchise which will have the effect of raising the Manchester School to power? Or will they agitate for Universal Suffrage which will enable them to obtain a full and fair representation of their own order – the vindication of their own rights – the assertion of their own interests? We have had enough of the Aristocracies in this country: but Household suffrage would create another and a new Aristocracy as terrible in its effects as the influence of the old and still existing Aristocracy has been. Household Suffrage would create an Aristocracy of the *represented* in opposition to the *unrepresented*; and this would perpetuate all the evils of class-legislation, antagonistic interests, and the constant warfare between Capital and Labour. I have been called a revolutionist and denounced as a man who preaches the doctrines of disorder. But my real aim is to save the country from a bloody revolution and establish the cause of order. To do this, however, I must see a social revolution effected by moral means; and the cause of order which I advocate is not the one based upon the tyrant’s power and supported by the *Times*, but the one that is established upon the well-being of the whole community. I say, therefore, that Universal Suffrage can alone lead to these grand results;—and no measure falling short thereof will confer any real or substantial benefit upon the enslaved, toiling, oppressed masses.

In consequence of the severe domestic affliction which I have so recently experienced, in the loss of my eldest son, I am unable to appear upon the public platform for the present and advocate the cause of Universal Suffrage as heretofore: nor indeed, even if my own feelings permitted me at the moment, would it be decent or delicate for me to do so. But in the seclusion of my own study I am both enabled and allowed to commit my opinions to paper relative to that grandest of all political principles; and I conjure the Working Classes of this country to give their serious consideration to the views which I now so deferentially, but so earnestly submit to them. It is a matter of almost life or death with the industrial portion of the community, whether they will continue their glorious struggle on behalf of the principles which alone can achieve their political freedom and social emancipation, - or whether they will commit themselves to the Manchester School of quacks and impostors, as a man in a moment of despair surrenders up his soul to Satan.

Political reform can only be considered of any value in proportion as it leads to social ameliorations. The question is not a mere abstract one – not the mere ceremony of conferring the right of voting upon Tom Smith and Harry Jones: but it is to give Tom Smith and Harry Jones the means of throwing off the shackles of bondsmen – of placing them in such a position that they shall enjoy the fruits of their own honest toil – of giving them their fair share of the earth's produce – of telling them that the need no longer work for idlers and tax eaters who do not work at all – of relieving their minds from the cankering anxieties which then now experience for the future welfare of their children -of rendering their wives and families immediately happy and prosperous – and of remodelling all the

laws and institutions of the country in such a way that their influence shall operate for the universal good, and not for the benefit of the favoured few to the prejudice of the many. These are social reforms; and such social reforms are only to be acquired through attainment of political rights. But if only a small portion of these political rights be obtained, the hope of accomplishing social reform must still be far distant. The Working Classes have nothing, therefore, to gain – but, on the contrary, much to risk – by a partial extension of the franchise: whereas all their energies, all their aspirations, and all their hopes should be concentrated in the grand uncompromising struggles for Universal Suffrage.

The Approaching Ruin of the Small Traders

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A plague, dark and fatal as any that fell upon Egypt or the primeval ages of the world, is already looming over the British Isles. I allude to a wide-spread and *dramatic*²⁴ period of commercial distress, which is not very far distant. Such a visitation is inevitable; and the *number*²⁵ of bankrupts will be more appalling than were on the cholera-lists of 1849. For all the smaller traders and retailers are doomed to become victims to the demon of Competition. It is useless for them to hug the hope that "times will mend" and "things will improve;" they would abandon the miserable, cowardly habit of deceiving themselves, and should pluck up the courage to look the coming evil full in the face. While the cholera is yet in the distance, it was not particularly dreaded: *but*²⁶ when it began decimating the inhabitants with its merciless hand, how many thousands fled in horror and *dismay*²⁷ from the capital, to seek a hoped-for security by the sea-side. Then what bitter regrets, also, were experienced that no preparations had been made to received the enemy; and how many thousand lives might have been spared had such precautions been wisely and deliberately adopted. So it is with the coming period of distress. The

²⁴ Word obscured by binding.

²⁵ Word obscured by binding.

²⁶ Word obscured by binding.

²⁷ Word obscured by binding.

prognostic signs of its advent are daily growing more apparent: but the nearer the danger approaches, the more resolute do men seem to shut their eyes to the impending calamity. Coming, however, it will – come it will: and then how loud will be the wailings and how manifold the regrets that no timely attempt was made to ward off the evil!

I tell the smaller traders and the retailers of this country, that such a terrific commercial crisis as the civilized world never saw before, is close at hand: and when once its work of destruction begins the devastation this will be merciless- the havoc wholesale. Let any small trader who reads this article, ask himself whether his profits are not diminishing year after year? -let any retailer whose eyes dwell upon these lines, pause and reflect whether the older he grows and the longer he remains in business, he does not find it the more difficult to live? From the grocer with the handsome shop – front, down to the petty chandler – from the hairdresser with his well-decorated window, down to the penny barber – from even the high -priced baker at the West End, down to the cheap-bread baker in the poorest neighbourhood,—all are complaining of the consequences of competition. If they look into their books, they will no doubt find that they do as much business now as they did ten years ago – perhaps more: it is not that their trade is diminished, but that the profits of this trade are rapidly becoming smaller and smaller, so that in a short time they will dwindle down to nothing at all. The petty shops must compete with the larger ones: inasmuch as the former cannot buy goods in such quantities as the latter, they are compelled to pay a higher price. They must nevertheless retail them at the same price as their wealthier neighbours – or even at less, in order to keep a connexion together: and thus it is quite clear that as the

process of competition continues, the petty shopkeepers will be entirely swamped very shortly – those a little above them will go next – and only the largest dealers will be enabled to stand their ground.

Therefore, let not the smaller traders and retailers kid themselves to the real cause of this downward descendency which they are experiencing: let them not attribute their progressive destruction and approaching extinction to any other influence than the right one. It is useless to go to the Abyssinian mountains to search for the source of the Thames, when a little inquiry will convince every one that it may be found in the Cotswold hills of Gloucester: nor will any but a mad man confound the Thames with the Nile. Neither, then is it necessary to look to the state of continental markets or the condition of foreign nations in order to find the springs of approaching bankruptcy at home: for the cause is present amongst us - it is here, in the country – abroad, on the face of the land – staring us in the face – haunting us whithersoever we go – insinuating itself into all our transactions – and infusing its poison throughout the whole system. In a word, that cause is Competition.

In consequence of the Free Trade measures, commodities are greatly reduced in value: a much less amount of capital is therefore locked up in them than formerly. Hence does a large amount of capital remain in the market unemployed; and those who possess this unemployed capital are constantly seeking the earliest and best opportunities to make investments. This circumstance accounts for the high prices maintained by the public funds; and the fact, instead of being a proof of the prosperity of the country, is actually an argument on precisely the contrary side. But we find that persons possessing capital

cannot always obtain investments; and the result is that they are compelled to embark it in trade as the only available means of rendering it a source of income and reaping anything in the shape of a return. All this tends to augment competitions – to extend its ramifications – to open a thousand new channels for the exercise of its influence: and the proportionate diminution of the rate of profits is the inevitable consequence. But this process will continue: vainly do the sanguine, the hopeful, or the desperate exclaim that it *must* stop somewhere. It will never stop until it has done the work of ruin and desolation: for Competition is a river that is always widening and deepening – ever accumulating strength, increasing in rapidity, and multiplying its branches – so that as it thus acquires bulk and volume, it must in the end expand into the magnitude of a flood and roll with the fury of a torrent, engulfing in a common ruin all who are unable to battle against the rage.

Competition, then, will go on increasing; and the profits of the smaller traders will go on diminishing. The result will be bankruptcies innumerable – insolvencies beyond all counting – the breaking up of thousands and thousands of homes – the desolation of myriads of families – and the bitterest distress throughout the length and breadth of the land. Out of every ten small traders, nine must inevitably go. Nothing can save them, so long as the present system lasts. They are doomed beings – they and their families: their destruction as a class is written in the book of destiny. Nor let them flatter themselves that the fatal day is yet far distant: I tell them it is almost at hand. The signs of its approach are stamped on the ledger and written in the balance-sheet of every retailer and small trader in Great Britain!

But can the evil be yet averted? – is it too late to rescue these myriads of families from utter ruin and destruction? They need not despair if they will only look the approaching calamity boldly in the face – ascertain its cause – and insist upon the application of the remedy. And what is this remedy? A thorough, prompt, and radical reform in the institutions of the country. The shopkeepers and retailers have hitherto pursued the disastrous policy of siding with the rich against the poor – of supporting the Aristocracy, the Government, and the Legislature in the exclusion of the industrial classes from the elective franchise. What is the consequence? That these shopkeepers and retailers have upheld a system of class-legislation to which they are now about to fall victims in their turn. The day of retribution is near at hand: and nothing but timely repentance for the past and immediate change of conduct for the present can divest the looming future of the disastrous influences with which it is teeming.

Competition is a monster which these Frankensteins of shopkeepers have themselves created and inspired with all its terrible vitality: and now it is pursuing them to devour them wholesale. They cannot shackle the giant – they cannot check the speed at which he travels – they cannot subdue the rapacity of his cannibal appetite. So long as the monster is permitted to exist, will it carry terror, dismay, desolation, and ruin throughout the country. The only means of escaping from its almost universal fury, is to destroy it. And if the smaller traders and retailers wish to know how that are thus to achieve a triumph over their enemy, let them study the state of parties in this country – the effects of class-legislation – the unbridled license allowed to the spirit of monopoly – and the tyranny which is constantly effected by means of capital. From

inquiries into these subject will result the conviction that the whole social system must be remodelled; and in order to effect this grand reform, the masses must first be put in possession of their political rights.

Now let me address myself direct to you, the smaller traders and retailers of this country! You have hitherto opposed the claims of the working classes with all your might and main: but what are you earning for yourselves by supporting the Aristocracy and Moneyocracy? Blind and insensate beings that you are, you are earning ruin and destruction; yes, ruin and destruction for yourselves, your wives, and your little ones! Come, reflect calmly – do not remain wilfully blind – think for yourselves, instead of being hoodwinked and humbugged, deluded and duped, by the *Times*, *Chronicle*, or any other newspaper which is wedded to class-interests. A little sober meditation, if followed up by energetic action, will save thousands of you from bankruptcy and ruin. Now, am I speaking to you as a friend or as an enemy? Am I giving you good advice when I implore you to take into your serious consideration all these grave matters of which I have been treating? Believe me, that those are your real enemies who seek to blind you as to the perils which environ you, or to divert your gaze from the actual causes of those perils. No man can be your foe who honestly and frankly tells you the truth and strains every nerve to save you from destruction. If I saw a child upon the brink of a precipice amongst the flowers that veil it, should I not stretch out a hand to the rescue? – would it not be criminal in me to stand calmly by and behold the innocent creature pursuing its gambols in a false security upon the very confines of destruction?

You, the smaller shopkeepers, must make common cause with the working classes. There is not a moment to be lost. Do not fancy that others will achieve the necessary work of reform for you. You are bound, in duty to yourselves – your wives – and your children, to adopt an energetic resolve with promptitude. The very class that you have been opposing so strenuously, is the one with which you must combine in order to save yourselves from destruction. You know not the generosity of the working classes: you have been taught by hireling journals and evil advisers to hate, mistrust, and fear them. Depend upon it, they would prove your best friends. They possess intelligence – honesty – moral worth – and fortitude. Extend the hand of friendship towards them – and it will not be rejected. Go with them for Universal Suffrage – nothing short of it, mind: and believe me that were once the elective franchise thus extended, the result would be such a representative Legislature as would speedily enact those reformatory measures that can alone save *you* from destruction.

No apathy is more criminal than that which a man shows when ruin is staring him in the face. Then is the time for him to develop all his moral energies. He must not close his eyes to the presence of the spectre which already stands before him, grim and ghastly though it be: but he must seek the talisman that will charm it away and consign it back again to the realms of darkness whence it issued. That spectre is now staring you in the face: that talisman which you must exert yourselves to possess, is Reform. But not the reform of the Manchester School: this class of politicians comprises all the arch-supporters of monopoly and competition. The Reform that you must seek, is that which will result from Universal Suffrage, protected by the accessory principles so often set forth: for this

Reform can alone destroy that monopoly and that competition which are hurrying you on at railroad pace to the abysm of destruction. The mode of procedure is simple and easy. Declare yourselves for Universal Suffrage -attend the meetings got up by the working classes – and cease to patronise those prints which delude, deceive and blind you. Make up your minds manfully and resolutely to discard all prejudice and judge for yourselves. You are as capable of sober reflection and intelligent reasoning as any other class in the community; then wherefore cling wilfully and blindly to systems which no more suit the wants, interests, and circumstances of the present age than would the barbarism of Morocco applied to British civilisation! Again I tell you that you stand upon the verge of destruction – and that your only salvation will be found to exist in an alliance with the working classes in the grand struggle to obtain political rights as the means of effecting social reforms.

The Approaching Commercial Crisis and the Great Exhibition of 1851

Original citation: G.W.M. Reynolds, "The Approaching Commercial Crisis and the Great Exhibition of 1851"
Reynolds's Weekly Newspaper, 27 October 1850, p. 1.

Last week showed how a terrific commercial crisis was advancing with giant strides, and how the ruin of nine-tenths of the smaller traders and retailers would prove an inevitable catastrophe, unless timeously averted by the reforms in the political and social systems of the country. I demonstrated how the demon of competition was doing his appalling work, and how the profits of the shopkeeper were rapidly diminishing, although there be no falling off, but a positive increase, in the amount of their business and the extent of their trading. I here propose to exemplify how the diminution of their trade and their own approaching bankruptcy reacts to the operative classes, whom the same coming period of distress likewise menaces with its blighting, *menacing*²⁸ influence.

The effects of this influence upon the working classes are twofold: the first is a reduction in the rate of wages and the second is loss of employment. The former is bad enough, considering to what a beggarly pittance the standard of wages is already reduced: but the latter is starvation,²⁹ ruin, and destruction. The reduction of wages must necessarily arise not only from the fact that the retail dealer will beat down the prices of the wholesale dealer, and that the wholesale dealer will in

²⁸ Word obscured by binding.

²⁹ A word before 'starvation' was obscured by binding.

turn beat down the prices of the manufacturer,—but likewise from the circumstance that those small dealers and petty retailers who are first driven out of trade by the oncoming crisis, will necessarily be themselves reduced to the ranks of labour, thus swelling the number of those who *receive* and diminishing the number of those who *pay*³⁰ wages. The retailer will begin by telling the wholesale dealer who supplies him, that it is utterly impossible to continue paying the old prices and obtain a competency of profit to make a livelihood; and as there is as much competition amongst wholesale dealers as elsewhere, they must bend to circumstances and yield to the representations of the retailers. But these wholesale dealers will in their turn make similar representations to the manufacturers and require the same concessions: and as competition is likewise found to exist amongst the manufacturers as actively and as virulently as anywhere else. This class must also yield to the wholesale dealers. But the manufacturers will in their turn indemnify themselves by some means; and their will speedily represent to the persons in their employment that they cannot continue to pay the same wages as before. Here we find excuse following excuse — plea *dropped*³¹ upon plea — until the chain of reactionary circumstances reaches the working classes: and these are the inevitable consequences of competition.

But the successive progress of evils will not stop here. The wholesale dealers will look as much as possible to *foreign*³² produce and manufacture which can be obtained at a cheaper

³⁰ Word obscured by binding.

³¹ Word obscured by binding

³² Word obscured by binding.

rate from abroad than at home. Prices are lower on the Continent, not only because *workers*³³ are much cheaper and far more plentiful than in England, but also because no country on the Continent has to yield up so much of the wealth produced by industry in order to sustain such financial burthens as England. Wages, then, being lower on the Continent manufactures are cheaper: and the wholesale dealer in England will naturally look as much as he can to the markets abroad for what he wants. The demands that are made upon the Continental markets will increase in activity and every year derive more and more imports from those quarters, while the home produce must by necessity fall off in proportion. The Great Exhibition of 1851 will give an enormous impetus to this competition between the foreign and the home manufacturer: and the aggregation of all the finest specimens of what foreign industry *can* produce, will show the English wholesale dealer precisely what he may rely on receiving from abroad. The Exhibition will prove the best possible advertisement for foreign manufacturers: it will serve not only as a means of exhibiting the samples, but also answer the purpose of circulars of catalogues announcing the articles in which they sell. The English wholesale dealer will inspect those samples and say to himself, “I wonder that I never knew before what excellent goods may be obtained from abroad in such- and – such a line;” and he will forthwith send off his orders accordingly. If the foreign manufacturers were to send ten thousand commercial travellers to England, provided with all requisites samples, materials, and catalogues, they could not do so much for their own benefit by these means in twenty years as the Great

³³ Word obscured by binding.

Exhibition will achieve for them in a single month. What, then, will be the result of all this? Why, that wholesale dealers will trust more than ever the produce of foreign markets – the home manufactures will diminish in proportion – and vast numbers of our English operatives must inevitably be thrown out of employment.

The hope held out by the advocates of the Great Exhibition is that the British manufacturer will beat the foreign one. But this promise is based upon a³⁴ wilful delusion. I do not mistrust the skill and ingenuity of the British operative: but I know that as much as wages are lower upon the Continent, foreign produce must necessarily continue cheaper than home produce – and *cheapness* is the grand recommendation in this age of competition. From the industry of this country enormous sums are taken to meet our colossal expenditure. The interest on our national debt – our impressive Court and Royal Family – the costly administration of the government – the shoals of cormorants, placemen, pensioners, and sinecurists foisted upon the public purse – the rates of all descriptions – the *reapings*³⁵ of the greedy Church – and every other item of expenditure, constitute such a mill-stone around the neck of English industry that it cannot hope to compete in prices, while enduring so great a burthen, with foreign manufactures. Here lies the evil; and the result is that the foreigner must beat the home-producer for cheapness.

The effects of any reductions which the Government may be compelled to make in many of its departments, will tend to

³⁴ A word before ‘wilful delusion’ appears but is obscured by the binding.

³⁵ Word obscured by binding.

swell the ranks of labour. The recent dismissals from the dockyards necessarily threw the persons thus discharged upon the labour-market; and a similar result will follow the reduction of the army and navy. The pressure of the Income Tax has compelled thousands of families already to manage with a reduced number of domestic servants; and these are also thrown upon the labour-market in some way or another. Then, as the profits of the smaller traders and retailers go on diminishing, they will be compelled to dismiss their domestic servants wholesale. Thus the number of persons wanting work and employment will continue to augment, - while the amount of work and employment to be given them will continue to decrease.

Emigration has been tried as a remedy to meet the evil which the upper classes are too shrewd not to foresee, but too selfish to bend to. The Sidney Herbert scheme, though supported by so many grand names and backed by all the influence of the hiring *Chronicle*, has proved a wretched failure. I believe that I did somewhat to expose its infamy and damage its atrocious influence, by the articles which I penned at the time in my *Political Instructor* and *Miscellany*; and by these articles I saved thousands from the horrors, the disappointments, and the degradations that awaited those who were credulous enough to pin their faith to that vile and abhorrent system of wholesale transportation. But in spite of all the emigration that *has* taken place, wages are diminishing, the operatives are losing their employment, pauperism is augmenting, and competition in every industrial market is increasing.

The tremendous crisis of which I wrote last week in a prognostic sense, and to which I have been alluding in this

article, may in reality be said to have already commenced. The smaller master-bakers have begun to feel the withering influence of competition most acutely. Numbers of them are already broken up and reduced to the grade of journeymen. The smaller master – tailors are telling dreadful tales of the effects produced upon their business by those palaces of infamy, the “clothing marts” as they are called. The petty chandlers and grocers positively and candidly confess that they cannot get a loving; and in other trades the cry of distress has begun. Yes – it has begun: but as yet it is but a low and plaintive wail. Soon, however, will it swell and grow louder – others will take up the lament – and in a short time the sound will be increased by thousands of voices, all clamouring against the evils of competitions, proclaiming the ruin of myriads of families, and demanding great and searching reforms at the hands of the Legislature and the Government.

The manufacturers are aware of the approaching storm, and endeavour to avert its rage from themselves. Hence the selfish policy of the Manchester School. The National Parliamentary and Financial Reform Association endeavoured to enlist the sympathies of the merchants of London, and base its power upon their succour. This was the first move of that Association; and hence the real cause of Cobden, Bright, and the Manchester politicians keeping aloof from it in the first instance. But the merchants are so wedded to their money – grubbing pursuits, that they would not listen to the call of Sir Joshua Walmsley and his friends. As soon as the Manchester men saw that the interests of the manufacturers were not to be directly interfered with by the City merchants, they gave in their adhesion to the National Reform Association, which has consequently become a tool in the hands of the supporters of monopoly and

competition. But the interests of the smaller traders and retailers lie with the movement of the working classes; and nothing short of Universal Suffrage, protected and aided by the Ballot, Annual Parliaments, Payment of Members, Equal Electoral Districts, and the Abolition of the Property Qualification, can save either the shopkeepers or the working classes from utter ruin and appalling misery.

With regard to the Great Exhibition of 1851, all possible means, within the law, should be adopted to prevent it from taking place. Meetings should be got up to expose and denounce it: tracts should be printed and circulated to explain its pernicious tendencies; - and no opportunity should be lost of protesting against it. The only course which I do *not* advise, is to petition Parliament. This is utterly useless, inasmuch as the interests of the masses are not represented there. But the shopkeepers and the working classes may rest assured that they will bitterly, bitterly rue the day when that Exhibition was conceived in the brain of the German Prince whose whim it is got up to gratify. Surely we have enough competition at home without inviting that of foreigners. But of course Prince Albert's sympathies are all foreign. What can he possibly care about the interests of the British traders and working classes?— or what can this ignorant young man know of those interests, even if he were disposed to care for them? Nothing at all. And therefore I say to the shopkeepers and working classes of Great Britain, "It is better to trust in *yourselves* than place any confidence in Princes."

Prince Albert's Speech at York

Original citation: G.W.M. Reynolds, 'Prince Albert's Speech at York', *Reynolds's Weekly Newspaper*,
3 November 1850, p. 1.

Having on previous occasions so emphatically expressed my opinion that the Great Exhibition of 1851 will prove fatal in its effects upon British industry, I cannot do otherwise than notice the speech which Prince Albert delivered at the gathering of Mayors last *week*³⁶ in the city of York. That speech is a lamentable brand of ignorance, flippancy, and insult towards the working classes, impertinent side-blows at continental *workers*,³⁷ and gross misrepresentations of the public feeling in this country. It is wordy, disjointed, and full of sentences where the meaning is painfully involved in a cloud of windy verbiage. But taking the report as read in the *Daily News*, I shall proceed to comment on the Royal harangue.

The Prince, in the usual style of after-dinner flattery, "It has given me sincere pleasure to meet, you, the representatives of the all-important towns of the kingdom, assembled at a festive board, in token of the unity and harmony of feeling which prevails amongst those that you represent, on which I am persuaded the happiness and well-being of the country so materially depends." Whom does he allude to as being thus represented by the ennobled Mayors? The wealthier classes, of course: *for*³⁸ the working classes are no more represented in the

³⁶ Word obscured by binding.

³⁷ Word obscured by binding.

³⁸ Word obscured by binding.

Municipalities of the country than they are in the House of Commons. And yet this German Prince takes it upon himself to declare that “the happiness and welfare of the country” depends upon the “unity and harmony of feeling” prevailing amongst the favoured class that enjoy the municipal franchise. This is inferentially *excluding*³⁹ the civil existence of the working-class altogether and declaring that with the wealthier orders *alone have*⁴⁰ the power and the duty of maintaining the happiness and well-being” of the country. Pretty happiness and well-being, indeed, have these privileged orders established! But it is quite clear that they possess the *massive*⁴¹ sympathies and confidence of Prince Albert; and therefore it is equally evident that his Royal Highness as he is called, has no sympathy nor confidence in the working-classes.

The Prince, addressing the Mayors, says, “It was an idea honourable at once to the liberality and discernment of the Lord Mayor of London to invite you to assemble under an hospitable roof before you started in. the important undertaking upon which you were going to enter.” What intolerable balderdash is this! Where is the wonderful *discernment* in inviting a number of local authorities to a dinner? Truly, if such an ordinary and perfectly John Bull⁴² proceeding be regarded by the Prince as a proof of *government*, it is impossible to give him credit for a large *dose*⁴³ of that very useful quality. Discernment indeed! *But*,⁴⁴ to commence operations with a good dinner? Surely

³⁹ Word obscured by binding.

⁴⁰ Word obscured by binding.

⁴¹ Word obscured by binding.

⁴² Word obscured by binding.

⁴³ Word obscured by binding.

⁴⁴ Word obscured by binding.

Prince Albert must know that nothing can be done amongst the upper and middle classes generally, especially amongst corporate bodies, without plenty of guzzling gourmandizing beforehand. And yet it was a proof of *discernment* for the Lord Mayor of London to invite a host of guests to devour his turtle and venison? If anybody but a Prince had uttered such astounding nonsense it would be heartily laughed at throughout the length and breadth of the land. Why, there is not a single one of those degraded, persecuted, unrepresented working-classes whom Prince Albert pronounces civilly dead, that would not have blushed to use the word *discernment* in connexion with such a matter.

Speaking of the city of York, Prince Albert describes it as “the centre of a district in which a high state of agriculture is blended with the most extensive productions of manufacture.” Yes—but the men whose hard toil has tilled the land, are starving serfs: and the men whose industry produces those manufactures are oppressed and disenfranchised slaves. Their voices were not heard, Prince Albert, when your salary of £30,000 a-year was voted in the House of Commons: nor was their *discernment* considered when you were so preposterously created a Field Marshal and so ridiculously appointed a Judge. Not a word of gratitude had you to say to the workers and others whose sinew, blood, and marrow yield you up the luxuries in which you revel. Your thoughts as well as your sympathies were only with the owners of those agricultural districts which you admired, and with the employers of the men who produce the manufactures which you eulogised. The serfs and slaves themselves occupied *not*⁴⁵ your attention for a moment: but this

⁴⁵ Word obscured by binding.

is scarcely to be wondered at after all—for *they* were not represented at the great civic banquet at York.

Prince Albert, addressing the Mayors, indulges in a *fantasy*⁴⁶ that their “steady perseverance and sustained efforts ... and ensure for yourselves and the nation an honourable position in the comparison which you have invited.” This is of course an allusion to the Great Exhibition. But I repeat what I have said before—that although I do not mistrust the skill and ingenuity of British workmen, I say that the foreigners must inevitably beat them in the cheapness of the articles produced. Cheapness is the order of the day: competition lives by cheapening everything: and the Great Exhibition will display all the articles which foreigners can produce more cheaply than ourselves. Will not this encourage competition to a dreadful extent?—and is not competition already leading to the ruin of the smaller traders and retailers, and the distress of the working-classes felt throughout the country? Besides, the Exhibition will not only show us what foreigners can produce better or more cheaply than ourselves, but it will also enable foreigners to catch up with (?)⁴⁷ and readiness all our own improvements and excelling features in manufacture, art, and science. The suggestions and promptings thus afforded will not be lost on a French, German, and American ingenuity. Thus, affording an opportunity for the display of foreign manufactures, and by letting foreigners into a complete *knowledge*⁴⁸ of all the mysteries of our native ones, the Great

⁴⁶ Word obscured by binding.

⁴⁷ Word obscured by binding.

⁴⁸ Word obscured by binding.

Exhibition will prove a two-edged sword, cutting *two*⁴⁹ ways at British industry. The Prince himself emphatically says, "From all abroad, all accounts which we have lead us to expect that the works to be sent will be numerous and of a superior character." He moreover *says*⁵⁰ "All nations with whom communication is possible, are making great exertions and incurring great expenses in order to meet our plans." And no wonder: these nations will speedily and promptly reap the benefit of the Exhibition, to the destruction of British industry and the ruin of the British working-classes.

Prince Albert says, "Of our own doings at the Commission, I would have preferred to remain silent, but I cannot let this opportunity pass without telling you, how much benefit we have derived, in our difficult labours, from your uninterrupted confidence in the intentions, at least, which guided our decisions; and that there has been no difference of opinion on any subject between us and the local committees, which has not, upon personal consultation, and after open explanation and discussion, vanished and given way to agreement and identity of purpose." This tortuous, and ill-constructed sentence conveys another insult to the working-classes. It implies that the Commission is perfectly satisfied with the confidence of the aristocracy and moneyocracy, and cares not a rush for the *want of confidence* which exists amongst the working-classes. The sentence can mean nothing else: because it must be as notorious to each member of the Commission as it is to everyone else in the country, that the bare idea of the Exhibition is hooted,

⁴⁹ Word obscured by binding.

⁵⁰ Word obscured by binding.

denounced, and regarded with supreme indignation, but the working-classes generally.

Prince Albert steps out of his way, in the course of his speech, to pay a fulsome and sickening compliment to the late Sir Robert Peel. With pain and sorrow do I record a single word in depreciation of the dead: but when a German Prince thrusts himself forward as an eulogist of that departed statesman, I cannot help saying that this foreign Royal Highness affords another proof of his antagonism to the working-classes by lavishing such praises upon one who all his life was their bitterest enemy. "The constitution of Sir Robert Peel's mind was peculiarly that of a statesman," says Prince Albert, "and of an English statesman." Yes, God knows it was indeed: for English statesmen have invariably proved the upholders of all tyranny, oppression, and wrong—the uncompromising foes of progress—the rancorous enemies of true civilisation—the champions of everything artificial in society—and the cruel opponents of the rights, liberties, and interests of the toiling millions. "Whilst Sir Robert Peel's impulse," says Prince Albert, "drove him to foster progress, his sagacious mind and great experience showed him how easily the whole machinery of a state of society is deranged—and how important, but how difficult also, it is to direct its further development in accordance with its fundamental principles, like organic growth in nature." Was there ever a more wretched, grovelling, miserable excuse for that policy which inveterately clings to old abuses and long-existing corruption, and refuses to adopt any remedy or allow any reform until driven by stern compulsion to make such concessions? Why, Prince Albert proves himself a Tory of the worst and vilest school: the Carlton Club should at once vote him a piece of plate!

Yes—his Royal Highness is indeed an exemplary Tory. See how deftly he uses the established and stereotyped clap traps:—“Warmly attached to his institutions and revering the bequest left to him by the industry, wisdom, and piety of his forefathers, the Englishman attaches little value to any theoretical scheme.” Heaven knows that the working-classes have little cause to be grateful for any bequest which has descended from their forefathers: for slavery—vile, abject, loathsome slavery—is their heritage; and Prince Albert must be more than an idiot to suppose that the enslaved will willingly hug their chains or bless those who forged them. The *industry* of our forefathers!—who have garnered its produce? The indolent, luxurious, selfish *few*, to the utter exclusion of the toiling, hard-working *many*! Then again, the *wisdom* of our forefathers!—what has it handed down to us? An hereditary aristocracy—eight hundred millions of national debt—the paupers—the vilest code of laws that ever favoured the rich and oppressed the poor—a bloated Church that is a scandal and a shame throughout Christendom—Irish miseries—colonial discontent—hanging, flogging, and all kinds of inhuman punishments—a Chancery Court that in the refinement of its moral tortures outdoes the physical atrocities of the mediaeval Inquisition—and, in fine, so many flagrant abuses and tremendous evils, political and social, that if a few thousand working-men assemble quietly to petition Parliament, the Oligarchy trembles lest a Revolution take place, and Prince Albert himself runs away, all Field Marshal though he be, to Osborne House! So much for the happy traditions which are ascribed to the wisdom of our ancestors. As for what the *piety* of our forefathers has handed down to us, the account may be indeed be read in the ten or twelve millions of animal revenues enjoyed by the bloated, luxurious, ostentatious Church

Establishment; and the effects of such precious piety may be seen in the fact that the population is split into hundreds of conflicting sects. Really, after all, these little points are duly considered, I must deferentially submit to Prince Albert that he either talked very great nonsense, or else was guilty of great duplicity and deceit, when he undertook to eulogise the wisdom and piety of our forefathers.

But his acquaintance with Tory clap-traps does not stop here. He says, "It is owing to these national qualities that this favoured land, whilst constantly progressing, has still preserved the integrity of her constitution from the earliest times, and has been protected from wild schemes, whose chief charm lies in their novelty; whilst around us we have seen, unfortunately, whole nations distracted, and the very fabric of society endangered from the levity with which the result of the experience of generations, the growth of ages, has been thrown away to give place to temporarily favourite ideas." The idea of this *favoured land*! What—with its gaunt pauperism so hideous on every side—its myriads of prostitutes—its countless inquests upon persons who die of starvation—its fearful records of crime—its dens, holes, and pestilential nooks, in which the poor are huddled together—its innumerable evidences of dire distress and appalling misery—and its widespread discontent! Is *this* a favoured land! Surely the toiling millions do not pay Prince Albert something like fifty thousand a-year for thus denying their sufferings and insulting their privations. But heaven knows it has proved a favourable land to *him*! Contrast his present position with what it was in the beggarly Duchy of Saxe-Coburg Gotha: contrast his income of merely £50,000 a year with the *less than a thousand a-year* which was all he had ere he married Queen Victoria. There is

something heartless to a degree in this young man, whose dogs are better fed at the national expense than honest working-men are by their own industry—there is something, I say, heartless and cruel to a degree in this endeavour to gloss over the sufferings of the poor by representing the country as a favoured land. Does he know nothing of the condition of the London seamstresses?—has he not read the “Letters upon Labour” in the *Morning Chronicle*? If not, how dare he go about making speeches on matters of which he is profoundly ignorant? In so doing, he is all the more blameable, because his high position naturally gives an authority to his words: and the cause of the oppressed half-starved portions of the community is cruelly injured by this blinking or positive denial of their wrongs and miseries.

Then again, by what right does he step out of his way to level his puerile satire at the glorious patriots of Continental Europe? He talks of the “levity with which the result of the experience of generations, the growth of the ages, has been thrown away to give place to temporarily favourite ideas.” Does he allude to the policy and deeds of Kossuth—of Mazzini—of the German patriots—of the French Revolutionists? Only conceive Prince Albert taking upon the himself to criticise such men! Why, all Prince, Field-Marshal, Judge, University-Chancellor, and anything else that he may be, he cannot hold a rush light to any one of the glorious men whom he thus dastardly flings a stone at. But his sympathies are no doubt with Haynan and Jellachich, as they were with the Emperor of Russia whom he received so warmly a few years ago at the British Court. Levity, indeed! Was there any levity displayed on the part of the French when they shattered to pieces the throne of Louis Philippe?—was there any levity

evinced by the Hungarians in their grand and sublime struggle against Austrian despotism? – was there any levity denoted in the uprising of the Germans against their numerous oppressors?—was there any levity apparent in the conduct of the brave Romans when they sought emancipation from an infamous priestly yoke? Prince Albert has wantonly insulted every man who entertains liberal opinions throughout Europe: he has levelled his malignity against all the admirers of those grand struggles which I have so hastily enumerated; and, in so doing, he has taken a bold stand which tells the English working-classes as plainly as such an attitude can do, that they have nothing to expect from their Government so long as he has any influence with the Sovereign who chooses her Ministers.

It has been said by some of the newspapers that Prince Albert's speech was not a political one: I have proved that many portions of it were decidedly and essentially political. He has been complimented for not taking a part in the policies of the day: but it is impossible to suppose that entertaining such ideas as he evidently does, he is capable of any such self-denial. He *must* feel interested in upholding the institutions which have raised him to the position of a demi-god: and in his anxiety to uphold them, he uses his influence accordingly. The base and scandalous intervention of England in the affairs of Portugal, when the brave Das Antas and Bomfin were leagued against the perjured Queen, was notoriously owing to Prince Albert's earnest representations at the time, that Queen's husband being his near relative. He does not openly patronise any particular party, nor profess any particular set of opinions: but he has plenty of opportunities of using his influence secretly—and that influence is of necessity omnipotent. At all events he has

partially drawn aside the mask at York: he has dealt in politics there—and his politics are proven to be utterly opposed to the cause of the working-classes.

The Obstacles to Financial Reform

Original citation: G.W.M. Reynolds, 'The Obstacles to Financial Reform', *Reynolds's Weekly Newspaper*, 10 November 1850, p. 1.

Lord John Russell, the Prime Minister, when examined on the Select Committee on Official Salaries, said, in reference to the scale of Ministerial allowances, "They are proportioned to our monarchical institutions, and I think to our aristocratical law." These admissions were most important; and the deductions to be made from them are inevitable. Here is an acknowledged abuse. What is it? That the salaries of Government officials are too high. Then wherefore no diminish them? Because the Crown is so costly and the laws are so aristocratic. The conclusion is obvious: make the Crown less costly, and the laws less aristocratic.

Surely it will not be urged that the Crown must be maintained in its costliness, and the laws in the aristocratical tendency? Because this would be proclaiming at once that the interests of the millions are to be sacrificed to the benefit of the few. It would also be to declare that the Sovereign is so eminently selfish, and the Aristocracy infamously grasping. I certainly have my own opinion upon the subject; but I do not think that Lord John Russell and his oligarchical friends would like such a deduction to be made.

But if the Government salaries are really too high, and if they cannot be reduced until economies are practised elsewhere, and the privileges of the Aristocracy abolished, then by all means let those economies be put into force, and those privileges be annihilated. The country must not be suffered to

pay through the nose both ways. Here is one evil admitted; but it cannot be remedied until another evil be previously attacked. Then attack the latter evil, in reason's name; so that we may arrive as speedily as possible at the cure of the first. Let me suppose that a man has two children – a son and a daughter; and that his pecuniary embarrassments render it necessary for him to think of retrenchment. He says to his daughter, "My dear Jane, I cannot any longer allow you fifty pounds a – year for your clothes: I must reduce the stipend." She would reply, "But how shall I look when going, indifferently dressed, to church with my brother John on Sunday?" So long as you allow him a hundred a –year to purchase fine garments and jewellery, you must continue to allow me enough to keep pace with him as his sister." The father would instantly reply, "Then if I cannot in reason reduce your allowance without any diminishing that of your brother, I must of course cut down his expenses, as economy is absolutely necessary."

The case therefore lies in a nut-shell. The Ministerial salaries are too high; and they cannot be reduced unless the incomes of the Crown and Aristocracy be diminished. The Crown receives nearly 400,000*l.* a – year, besides Prince Albert's income (derived from various sources) of close upon 50,000*l.*: and Mr. Cobden, in his budget, has proposed to reduce the former to 200,000*l.*; but he says nothing of the latter. I should suggest that 20,000*l.* would be ample for the wants of any young lady, and to keep her husband also; and therefore I propose that the Crown should have twenty thousand, and Prince Albert nothing at all. This arrangement, so long as monarchical institutions last in the country, will be most judicious; and concurrently with this reduction, the proper

measures may be taken for the destruction of the privileges of the Aristocracy.

But how is this most desirable aim to be accomplished? Lord John Russell, in his evidence before the same Committee as that already mentioned, points to the remedy. He says, "I think that the law of primogeniture is the case of there being a great number of persons with very considerable incomes." The system of primogeniture, then, is one of those aristocratical laws which he previously alluded to as presenting a barrier to the reduction of Ministerial salaries. Then why not destroy this law of primogeniture? It is admitted to be an obstacle in the way of prudential economy; and all such obstacles should be trampled underfoot. A Ministry which takes no measure to remove the evil which it comprehends and recognises, is either incompetent or dishonest; and in either case it should at once throw up the reins of power. Its existence in office is a proof that there must be something vilely corrupt and radically wrong in the institutions of the country. Such institutions, then, demand a thorough and searching reform. If they ever suited any age at all, even the most barbarian, it is clear as daylight that they are totally incompatible with the present one. But why should the task and duty of reforming them be delayed? Every moment of such delay is a cruel injustice to the masses of the community: every instant of postponement deepens the disgrace which must indelibly attach itself to those Ministers who see and acknowledge abuses, but will not tackle them.

The apology for the continuation of our high Ministerial salaries is in itself the most glaring – the most lucid – and the most incontestable proof of the evils of the present system. Those salaries cannot be reduced, because they are "proportioned to our monarchical institutions and our

aristocratical law.” But why should this country pay so dearly for its institutions, when the United States of America afford a proof of the cheapness at which a government can be carried on? – why should we be burthened with these aristocratical laws when the United States show that twenty-four millions of people can be far more happy, free, prosperous, and enlightened without them? Now, if these aristocratical laws benefitted the majority of the people in this country, the question might become a trifle more difficult: but when it is notorious that they exist for the exclusive advantage of only a comparatively few families, upon what earthly principle of justice, honour, policy, or common sense, are they suffered to disgrace our statute – book?

Are the millions to be pauperised for the sake of these few families? What possible reason can there be for oppressing the many for the sake of the few? Such a system is repugnant alike to the intelligence of man and the laws of heaven; and every priest who upholds such a system from the pulpit, is an enemy to his God – while every statesman who advocates it in the legislature, is a traitor to his country. The law of primogeniture is the most ingenious device that ever Satan put into the head of man for the purposes of cruelty, robbery, oppression, and plunder. It encourages the most revolting inhumanity on the part of a father towards his younger children: it accumulates colossal fortunes in the hands of a few, to the beggary of the many;—it ties up the land, man’s natural heritage, in the possession of a minority, to the utter exclusion of the majority from the enjoyment of what God himself gave them;—it foists the junior scions of patrician families upon the public purse, thereby robbing the industrious classes who have to fill that purse;—it exalts a few individuals, by means of wealth, titles,

and honours, above the masses of the community;—it places power, influence, and privilege indiscriminately in the hands of men whom the accident of birth may render either fools or sages, knavish or virtuous, unprincipled or honest, lunatic or intellectual; - and it divides society into antagonistic sections, thereby sustaining class-interests and all the usual contentions, envies, and even more serious struggles, between the oppressor and the oppressed – the prosperous and the pauperised.

Lord John Russell showed in his evidence the paramount necessity of diminishing the extravagant income allowed the royal family, and of annihilating the aristocratical portion of our laws. Until this be done, he proves that no effectual economies can be introduced elsewhere. But the existence of a wrong in one quarter must not be permitted to serve as an excuse for the perpetuation of a wrong in another quarter. If the two wrongs are so mysteriously connected – so sympathetically associated – and so reciprocal in the very essence of their being, then let them both be grappled with, even as Hercules caught the two snakes at the same moment and strangled them. Hercules was an infant in his cradle when he did this: Lord John Russell is a man of mature years with a quarter of a century's experience to guide and strengthen him. Let him, then, come boldly forward, and propose an immense diminution in the royal allowances, and the total reform of our aristocratical laws. He must do this to vindicate his own character as an honest man, if he wish to enjoy that distinction.

But it is easy to say what he ought to do: the question nearer home at present is what he will do. And this, I fear, is nothing, - absolutely nothing of his own accord. He must be driven into the path of reform, or else be driven from office. These alternatives would be presented to his choice, if the masses only

did their duty, and cried as loudly for reform now as they did nineteen or twenty years ago. But that cry should not be for a mere partial measure: it must be a cry for complete and searching reform – a cry that will shake the nation, and vibrate in the ears of that privileged order which has based its power and its arrogance upon corrupt institutions. Let the cry be for Universal Suffrage – and let the resolve be deeply founded in each heart to take nothing less. In the presence of Universal Suffrage, that colossal expenditure of the Crown, and those aristocratical laws which are admitted by the Prime Minister himself to be such tremendous barriers in the way of financial reform, would speedily disappear. There is no hope for this country, save in Universal Suffrage: destruction is advancing upon the middle-class traders and the working-class slaves with giant strides; competition is sweeping over us like a pestilence – and we are a doomed nation, unless we fly into that sanctuary which Universal Suffrage can alone afford.

“Our Glorious Constitution”

Original citation: G.W.M. Reynolds, ‘Our Glorious Constitution’, *Reynolds’s Weekly Newspaper*, 17 November 1850, p. 1.

At the lord Mayor’s banquet on the 9th of November, Lord Palmerston launched into a flaming eulogy of what he was pleased to call “our glorious Constitution,” and represented it as being susceptible of adapting itself to any age, even the most enlightened. Now, in the first place, I defy Lord Palmerston to prove that we have any Constitution at all: and in the second place, shall undertake to show that the system which he calls the Constitution, is not of the expansive and self-modelling one that he represented in his after-dinner oration at the Guildhall.

Those persons who talk of the British Constitution, either do not know what a Constitution really is, or else none that we possess one for the purpose of masking the vitiated, deficient, and tyrannical nature of our form of government. We have a system, it is true: but this does not make a Constitution. Russia has both a system of government and established institutions: but it is called an unconstitutional country. The same remark applies to Turkey; but Lord Palmerston would not venture to assert that neither Russia or Turkey possessed a Constitution. That his Lordship does really understand what a Constitution means, is clear from his despatches to English Ambassadors at different times and places. Thus, for instance, in 1848, he recommended the King of Naples to grant a Constitution to the Sicilians; and in the rebellion of the Antas against the Queen of Portugal, he enjoined the Queen to observe the Constitution to

which she had *agreed*.⁵¹ In his speeches in Parliament, he has spoken of the Constitution which was given to Greece by the Guaranteeing Powers; and he has also alluded to those Sovereigns who have given the Constitutions to the people over whom they rule. Thus Lord Palmerston is quite sure of what a Constitution really is: he knows that many countries were governed until lately by no Constitution at all, and that several have had Constitutions⁵² given to them;—and he is not ignorant of the fact that some of these Constitutions have been taken away by the very monarchs who gave them, and that the countries where this has happened have become unconstitutional again.

Neither is the Press of Great Britain ignorant of what a Constitution really is. The *Times* speaks of “the necessity of revising the French Constitution:” the *Daily News* some months ago began an article by observing that “the last vestige of the Constitution granted by the King of Naples had now disappeared;” and several other newspapers have shown to how many different Constitutions the King of Prussia has sworn. In fact, every person of any historical education or political knowledge at all, is acquainted with the nature, meaning, and purpose of a Constitution.

A Constitution, then, is a set of fundamental principles, drawn up on paper, and existing as the basis of the government. In any country where there is a Constitution, the whole system must be based upon it. It therefore must precede, and be prior to, the system of government which it defines and marks out: or at all events it must be the starting point for a new or

⁵¹ Word obscured by binding.

⁵² Word obscured by binding.

improved system that may be introduced. After the Revolution of 1848, and until the Constitution was drawn up and promulgated, there was merely a *provisional* government: because, the old Constitution, or Charta, being annihilated by that convulsion, there was no *established* system of government until another Constitution should make one. The present system, therefore, is based upon this new Constitution; and if any one wishes to know how the country became governed by a President instead of a King, or how there happens to be only one Chamber instead of two, he looks into the constitution and finds the origin and basis of this form of government.

It is quite clear, then, that a Constitution is a written note of principles, preceding all government and forming the only proper authority for any system of government that may exist in a country. But to be a just and honest Constitution, it should be framed according to the sentiments and wishes of the entire nation, expressed through the medium of their representatives: and in order that those sentiments and wishes may be properly expressed, the representation must of course be chosen by Universal Suffrage. Let me suppose that a thousand colonists proceed to some far-off island, previously unestablished, and where they propose to settle. On their arrival they experience the immediate necessity of having a form of government. They appoint twenty of their number to draw up a plan. Of course these twenty were chosen by the suffrages of the whole body: for no one would be idiot enough to manifest indifference or abandon his right with regard to the privilege of selecting the representatives of his opinions in so important a matter. The twenty delegates thus chosen, form a Convention: they draw up their plan, and submit it to the whole body. This plan is called

the Draught of a Constitution; and if it be accepted by the whole body, it becomes the Constitution. Then, in accordance with the provisions it contains, does the system of government immediately take its rise: and whether that system be King, Lords, and Commons – or a President with one Legislative Assembly – or a President with two Legislative Assemblies – no matter what the form the government may be, whether Monarchical or Republican, it exists according to the Constitution.

Now, suppose an Englishman asks how we come to have King, Lords, and Commons, who can show him the written Constitution establishing this form of government? Will Lord Palmerston tell us where such a Constitution exists? I am perfectly aware that customs and practice have given their sanction to the system: but I deny that the system results from a Constitution. There never was a convention called in England to make a Constitution: the national consent was never obtained, through representatives, to any system which has been known to exist in this country. Concessions have been made by Sovereigns, as in the matter of Magna Charta by King John: but Magna Charta was only a Reform Act, like that of 1832, with the difference that the former emanated direct from the Sovereign, and the latter from the Parliament. But Magna Charta was not a Constitution – the Bill of Rights was not a Constitution – the Reform Act was not a Constitution. If the Parliament adopted Sir Joshua Walmsley's programme next session, it would not be a Constitution: neither would the voting of the Charter be a Constitution. The one or the other would only be a greater or lesser measure of Reform – a signal change, but not a Constitution.

In a country where there is a real Constitution, the power of reforming itself is not left to the government: because common sense proclaims that where reform is needed, corruption must exist, and as the government profits by such corruption it will be slow or downright unwilling to introduce reform. The French Constitution provided that another Convention must be called if that Constitution should need reform: and every one knows that when the Legislative Assembly undertook to alter the Constitution in respect to Universal Suffrage it violated that Constitution. Now, were there really a Constitution in England, there would be a provision for its alteration or amendment: but the proof that there is no Constitution at all, is found in the fact that the House of Commons, prior to the passing of the Reform Bill, must have existed, precisely as it was, in accordance with that Constitution: and it had no power of its own to alter this Constitution, even for the purpose of reform. That it did reform itself somewhat and introduce a considerable change into the representative system, is a proof that this system was based upon no Constitution at all. For as I have already shown, a Constitution can only emanate from the whole nation; and therefore no power but the whole nation can legally and properly change it.

I have now proved that Lord Palmerston eulogised a shadow when he praised “our glorious Constitution:” and it will take but little trouble to show that the system which he thus dubs a Constitution, is *not* so elastic, pliant, and expansive in proportion to the enlightenment of each successive age, as his lordship chooses to represent. According to that system, then, we are governed by King, Lords, and Commons. The Americans and the French, who are certainly as enlightened as ourselves, have no Lords at all in their Constitutions: the former

never had any, and the latter have got rid of them. But I do not find that our system is so self-accommodating to the progress of enlightenment, as to have given its Lords the go-bye and tossed them overboard. Then again, the Americans and the French have no bench of Bishops: but although we have been building new Houses of Parliament, I do not find the bench for the Bishops has been forgotten. At all events, if it were necessary to preserve *that* bench, why did not our pliant and expansive system admit *another* bench for the dignitaries of the Dissenting Church? Either this ductile and self-accommodating system, when so admirably adapting itself to the spirit of the age should have got rid of the one bench or else have established the other: for as matters now stand, one sect is decidedly too much represented in Parliament, or the other too little – and both have an equal right to such representation, if any at all be admitted. Then again, the Americans enjoy Universal Suffrage: France, even with her burked franchise, still reckons her voters by millions, while we have barely one million: - Belgium, Sweden, Switzerland, and eve tyrant - ridden Prussia, have far more liberal representative systems than England. Why, then does not our elastic “Constitution,” as Lord Palmerston dubs it, expand in a similar proportion? Does he mean to say that Englishmen are less enlightened than Americans, Frenchmen, Belgians, Swiss, Norwegians, and Prussians?

We have no Constitution: and our system is very far from expanding in the same ratio with the intellect, spirit, and interests of the age. The bravado about “our glorious Constitution” is one of those despicable fictions and scandalous frauds by means of which so many Englishmen are gulled, duped, and hoodwinked relative to the rottenness and

corruption of their institutions. By persuading men that they are really free, it is so easy to gratify their vanity and induce them to hug the chains of slavery. And at these civic banquets, where the aristocracy and the higher grades of the commercial class meet together, every man is of course a voter; and, possessing the vote, they cheer the orator who tells them that they choose their own representatives! Of course they do: and it is precisely because the franchise is limited to such hands, that it is so badly exercised. Not one of the devourers of turtle and venison on the occasion referred to remembered or chose to remember that although *he* possessed the vote, and all his fellow convivialists possessed the vote, yet that millions were without it! Even if we really had a Constitution at all, it is high time to mend it, when we find that out of five millions of male adults, only one million has any political rights at all: and surely that could not be properly called “a glorious Constitution,” under the influence of which there are more *paupers* than *voters* in the country.

The Established Church and the Roman Catholics

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There perhaps never was an occasion on which the working classes displayed their wisdom, their integrity, and their sterling common sense, more completely than at the present instant, while the bigotry of the Prelacy is at war with the bigotry of Papacy. I am not now going to measure the respective excellence of creeds: I have no desire to rob Saint Peter of the keys to give them to Saint Paul. The gates of salvation may be in the custody of one saint, or of all: what seems irrefragably certain is that against no form of Christianity will they be closed. The Catholic has as much right to the free exercise of his worship as the Protestant: there are good and excellent men of both creeds- there are also the vilest of the vile professing either the one or the other. Neither sect is justified in denouncing or persecuting the other: nor should one assume to tolerate the other. Toleration itself is tyranny; because it is the assumption of a power on one side to grant the boom of worship on the other – and no man or set of men is justified in conceding as a favour that which is a positive right beyond all dispute.

What is all the present hubbub about? – a hubbub so scandalous, so disgraceful, so immitigably dishonouring to a civilised country! A few words will explain the whole matter. There is an Established Church in Great Britain and Ireland, sucking twelve millions annually from the vitals of the industrious classes in both islands. This Church is Protestant,

and has many Archbishops and Bishops, who live like Princes, rank with Peers, and sit in the Upper House of Parliament. The revenue enjoyed by this Church is greater than the united revenues of all the other Church Establishments in Europe; and greater than even the whole State revenue of Spain, which is the Catholic country *par excellence*. But in Great Britain and Ireland there are several millions of Catholics, who not only voluntarily support their own Church, but are compelled to contribute towards the maintenance of the Established Church, from the tenets of which they utterly and totally dissent. They acknowledge the Pope as the spiritual head of their Church; and this Pope has thought it right to give them Archbishops and Bishops, for whose maintenance they are quite ready and willing to pay. It is true that they had prelates before: but their hierarchy is now, as it were, being remodelled; and, according to their notions, more suitable and appropriate titles are being bestowed upon their Archbishops and Bishops.

This is the “head and front” of the whole offending on the part of the Catholics. But the Archbishops and Bishops of the Established Church are raising the cry that Protestantism is in danger, and that the Pope menaces the entire country with conversion to papacy. If such a peril did really exist, it would only show upon what a shallow foundation Protestantism rests: but that peril does *not* exist- no, not even in the minds of the hypocrites who proclaim it. They know full well that the intelligence of the masses and the rapid spread of Dissent are dealing death-blows at the colossal monopoly of the Established Church; and instead of crying out that “Protestantism is in danger,” they should tell the truth and say, “Our revenues, our luxuries, our palaces, our privileges, and our peerages are in danger!”

But what a sad example of Christian meekness, love, and charity, do the clergy of the Established Church at present afford for the contemplation of the world! Here we have mitred prelates and black-robed clergymen denouncing the Catholics with a fiend – like malignity, - endeavouring to goad the people to madness by their violent harangues and diabolical fulminations, - and perhaps aiming at a “holy war” against that sect which dares to differ from themselves. No yelping bloodhounds ever exhibited a more savage ferocity than that which really inspires the conduct of our clergy at the present moment: and I firmly believe that nothing would please them better than to hear that their insane denunciations had driven a few ignorant fanatics to offer violence to Cardinal Wiseman at London or Bishop Ullathorne at Birmingham. But this infamous attempt to get up a war of extermination against the Roman Catholics will not succeed: the working-classes have already shown the contempt and scorn with which they treat this quarrel between the British Prelacy and Romish Papacy; - and neither the agitation of desperate clergymen nor the Jesuitical policy of Lord John Russell will succeed in diverting the minds of the masses from the one grand object – Political Reform.

I am utterly opposed to Archbishops and Bishops altogether, no matter of what denomination. I believe that spiritual Princes and Peers are no more required than temporal Princes and Peers. But I declare emphatically that if it be necessary for Protestants to have prelates, it is equally requisite for the Catholics to have them; and if the Protestants have a Bishop of London, the Catholics have a right to have a Bishop of Westminster. The Catholic Bishop of Westminster cannot possibly exercise any control over the Protestants dwelling in

that city: whereas the Protestant Bishop of London does exercise a control over the Catholics in his diocese, inasmuch as they are compelled to pay towards his maintenance, and he has a voice in making the laws which they are bound to obey.

Before the nation precipitates itself headlong into idle conjectures relative to the dangers of Papacy, let it pause to reflect upon the ills which it has sustained at the hands of Prelacy. Twelve millions annually are absorbed by the cormorant Established Churches of England and Ireland: and with one or two occasional exceptions, the Archbishops and Bishops sitting in the House of Peers have invariably proved the bitterest, most rancorous, and the most virulent enemies of the people. What a pretty specimen of prelacy is the Bishop of Exeter! Look at his conduct in the Gorham case – how utterly opposed to common sense, justice, and reason. Such a man in enlightened France would be looked upon as a sort of Punch playing tragedy: but in this unhappy country his character is invested with all imaginable sanctity. Prelacy is the curse off England: it is a formidable barrier to progress – it is intolerant and illiberal to a degree – and by its ostentation, pomp, luxury, and avarice, it sets a mist pernicious example to the whole community. Our blessed Church is a bye-word for a scandal throughout Christendom: its very history is written in blood, and rendered awfully memorable by persecutions as vile as any that the Catholics ever practised: it has had its Inquisition – and now it wants its Holy War.

Reader, you are of course aware that in the Tower of London there are numerous implements and engines of torture; and it has been the fashion to ascribe these diabolical instruments to Catholic invention. Indeed, the opinion has been assiduously inculcated that they were manufactured by the Spaniards to use

against the English Protestants, and were taken from the shops of the Armada by Lord Howard of Effingham. I must likewise observe in this place that Lord John Russell, in his speech at the Guildhall banquet on Lord Mayor's day, eulogised the "Protestant Queen Elizabeth," and ventured to hint that Victoria would not fail to adopt her as an example in defence of Protestantism. Heaven forbid that the present Sovereign should do any such thing! And now, by what I am going to record, I will give the reader a farther insight than he may already possess into the character of the present Prime Minister of England.

The implements of torture contained in the Tower, were not manufactured by the Spaniards: nor were they made by Catholics at all. They were the handiwork of Protestants – fabricated in England- and in the time of that very Queen Elizabeth whom Lord John Russell recommends as an example to Queen Victoria. For torture was used in England during the reign of that same precious Elizabeth, and by her own special command. If she defended Protestantism, it was by torturing the Catholics; and surely the British people cannot wish to behold Victoria adopting a similar course? Elizabeth had no more right to be styled "Good Queen Bess," than she had to the distinction of "the Virgin Queen." She was a vile, merciless wretch – cruel as a Sovereign and profligate as a woman. A work recently published by Mr. Bentley of New Burlington Street, and containing the Despatches of Sir Christopher Hatton, her favourite Chancellor, proves incontestably that she intrigued criminally with that infamous statesman; and no man of common sense can doubt but that she was equally loose in her amours with Leicester and Essex. With regard to her cruelty, several warrants ordaining the infliction of the torture

upon Catholics, and signed by her own hand, are preserved in the British Museum; and there is one, dated 1565, commanding the authorities “to put a Papist vagrant to the rack, in order that he may be made to declare *why he wandereth abroad without a home!*” yet this is the lady who is praised for having given England merciful laws relative to the poor and vagrant, and whom Lord John Russell holds up as a pattern-defender of Protestantism, and as an example which (doubtless directed by his honest counsel) Queen Victoria is to follow!

The British Prelacy has therefore had its Inquisition in England. Under its influence, women have been burnt as witches; and the Archbishops and Bishops have notoriously been the most strenuous opponents to all emendations in our savage criminal laws. Now they are endeavouring to get up a crusade – a holy war -against the Catholic. Blood – blood: persecution – intolerance – bigotry: - these are the words which sum up the history and describe the policy of our British Prelacy from the time of Henry VIII down to the present day! Will the working classes, then, manifest any sympathy towards the Archbishops and Bishops of the Established Church? No such thing. Let that Church fall with a crash – and the true religion of the saviour will receive an enormous benefit.

But how did the Established Church become possessed of the lands, patronage, and enormous revenues which it now enjoys? By plundering the Catholics. The origin of the wealth of this Established Church embraces every feature of the most loathsome scoundrels and abhorrent villainy, as I will speedily prove. In Catholic times, suppose that a rich peer, knight, or gentleman experienced certain qualms of conscience on his death – bed: he confessed his sins to the priest, and in order to propitiate heaven, bequeathed broad lands or large revenues to

some particular shrine, church, or monastery, on condition that masses should be said for his soul's repose on a particular day, every year, until the end of time. Other persons, having no crimes to answer for, but through purely charitable motives, assigned lands and monies to religious institutions on condition that donations were to be given at particular periods to the local poor, and that all wayfarers were to be accommodated with a night's lodging and a good meal. By these means the Catholics obtained nine-tenths of the rich endowments belonging to their Church. But when Henry VIII proclaimed Protestantism and suppressed the monasteries, the new Established Church took possession of all those Catholic Endowments. The lands and revenues bequeathed by deceased persons *on special conditions*, became the property of the Protestant Clergy, who of course did not fulfil those conditions. But either the terms of the original donors should have been complied with, or the lands and revenues bequeathed for the express purpose should have been restored to the donors' families, or have merged in the national property. The Church, however, is not in the habit of disgorging anything: neither has it done so in the present case. The wax-tapers are not lighted – the masses are not said – the donations to the poor are not given: but the lands and revenues are tenaciously clung to by the Established Church. This Church has consequently violated all the original compacts by virtue of which those lands and revenues were bequeathed; and the possession of its inordinate wealth is thus based on fraud the most flagrant – perfidy the most infamous – and robbery the most bare-faced.

Instead of an agitation being got up against the Catholics, it should arise against the Prelacy. Let the proud, arrogant, domineering, luxurious Prelacy be destroyed: let those

Archbishops and Bishops – the Judas Iscariots of the Protestant Church – be demitred. They seek to put down Sunday travelling, cheap railways – trains and steam boat excursions, for the working-classes, while they roll along in their gorgeous chariots, attended by their powdered lacqueys, to the gates of the temple on the Sabbath: they endeavour to suppress Sunday – trading, shut up the public-houses and the bakers’ shops and compel the poor man to go without his beer and his hot joint, while they sit down to a board groaning beneath dainties of all sorts and covered with wines of every exquisite description. The mitred imposters – the sacerdotal hypocrites! And *they* dare to cry that Protestantism is in danger, when it is their own flagitious conduct that desecrates the Christian creed and dishonours a Christian country. The dignitaries of the Established Church as much resemble the primitive Apostles, as darkness resembles light. These Right Reverend Fathers in god live in defiance of the morality of the very creed which they profess, and which declares it to be “easier for a cable to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven.” They out-Herod all the most pampered Cardinals or bloated Abbots that ever belonged to the Romish hierarchy. The Pope and all his Court have not a revenue so large as the united incomes of the Archbishops and Bishops of our Established Church. The people of Great Britain and Ireland are annually robbed of twelve millions sterling to maintain this Church in its present proud, domineering, and voluptuous condition. How can it be wondered at, if tradesmen and farmers are all crying out that they cannot possibly endure the heavy pecuniary burthens fastened upon them? – how can it be wondered at, if the working classes are starving by millions, while those in Ireland are actually *famished* out of

existence? Where is the Christian sympathy, where the charity, where the benevolence of those prelates who take their thousands a-year, when they know that so many of their fellow creatures are perishing with want or dragging out a wretched existence in the accursed bastilles of the Poor Law?

Let the Church of England be reformed, before it dares to impugn the proceedings of the Catholics. We are in no danger from Papacy: but we are in immense danger from farther usurpations, grasping, and encroachments on the part of the Protestant Prelacy. There is nothing to fear from the Pope: but there is everything to fear at the hands of our own Archbishops and Bishops. Pluralism, simony, and nepotism, so strongly denounced by the early Fathers of the Church, are now flagrantly practised by our Clergy of the present day. Instead therefore of vociferating, "Down with the Catholics," let us exclaim, if religious agitation there must be, "Down with our Bench of Bishops!"

The Wisdom of Our Ancestors

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Whenever I hear a person begin to talk about the wisdom of our ancestors, I set him down as either a fool or a knave, if I do not previously know enough of him to enable me to determine whether he be a fool from ignorance and prejudice, or the knave from self-interest. A man who derives his income from permanent situation, a sinecure, a benefice, or any other corrupt source, will be loud and dogmatic in *venerating*⁵³ upon the institutions founded by our ancestors. It is very natural: the leech, if gifted with *the power of speech*⁵⁴ would praise the loathsome and corrupt body of the individual whose blood he was sucking. Again, *the corrupted*⁵⁵ persons of this class are so numerous, the *members*⁵⁶ generally so willing to maintain prejudices in (?)⁵⁷ propagating knowledge, and there are so many individuals who fatten and thrive upon the rottenness of the system, that this system obtains the advocacy of *a number*⁵⁸ of defenders. As paid trumpeters are to a standing army, so are these declaimers in the van of beasts and cormorants that prey

⁵³ Word obscured by binding.

⁵⁴ These words are completely illegible. The context suggests this is what Reynolds meant.

⁵⁵ Word obscured by binding.

⁵⁶ Word obscured by binding.

⁵⁷ Word obscured by binding.

⁵⁸ Word obscured by binding.

upon the good (?)⁵⁹ which they derive from the plunder of the
(?).⁶⁰

Whenever a Minister commences a speech by eulogising “our blessed Constitution,” and launching out extravagant praises of the “wisdom of our ancestors,” rest assured that he is about to consummate some tyranny or perpetuate some fresh wrong. The expertise of our institutions and the sagacity of our forefathers are invariably invoked as a cover and a blind for some projected encroachment on the liberties or interests of the people. No abuse, no mal-practice, no tyranny can ever be accomplished by our statesmen without a touching picture of the advantages which we derive from a constitutional government; and then the wisdom of those who established that government is referred to as a justification and a sanctification for the new atrocity or new scheme of plunder about to be attested.

Our ancestors were in reality a set of brutal miscreants; and any appeal to the alleged wisdom of such ferocious, *murderous*⁶¹ progenitors is a gross insult to the intelligence of our present age. Until very lately, our criminal code was the most sanguinary in all Christendom: and not forty years have elapsed since men were hung up by dozens, for the most trivial offences; every Monday morning, at the debtor’s door of Newgate. The very oldest inhabitants now in the country (persons of ninety odd years of age were in existence when women were burnt at the stake in the reign of that blood-thirsty monster – that fiend in human shape – George III. All our

⁵⁹ Word obscured by binding.

⁶⁰ Word obscured by binding.

⁶¹ Word obscured by binding.

earliest chronicles declare that torture was *not* contrary to the provisions of Magna Charta and the Constitution; and most of our monarchs used it down to the time of Queen Elizabeth. In fact, the horror of *pressing* a man refusing to plead, beneath a very heavy weight, was practised until a much more recent period: and that dreadful process, which gave its name to the press yard of Newgate, must be regarded as one of the phases that legalised torture has at different times assumed. The infliction of torture has therefore been preserved down to a period closely bordering upon our own times; and nor could it be said to be extinct until the abolition of the infernal ordeal that initiated the nomenclature of the press-yard.

Innumerable warrants of torture exist in our archives of public – records; and many of the instruments which that torture was inflicted, are still preserved in the Tower, as I explained last week. The law was that torture might be used “at the discretion of the king and privy council;” and every reader of history is aware that the miscreant Charles I, whom some (?)⁶² annually pray for as “a martyr,” made no strong use of that discretionary power. If he were a Saint then assuredly Greenacre was an angel, the Mannings in were Saints, and Rush should be canonized. Yet the name of that crowned fiend is still allowed to *adorn*⁶³ our Prayer-Book.

Well, then, our ancestors sanctioned the use of torture that was tolerated by the kings who inflicted it. What can we think of their wisdom? Were those the times [...] ⁶⁴ marked by the

⁶² Word obscured by binding.

⁶³ Word obscured by binding.

⁶⁴ Several words here are obscured by the binding and poor quality of the scans in general.

sagacity of our progenitors? Deeply and gloatingly as George III revelled in human blood, it would have warmed his heart good to have lived and reigned a couple of centuries earlier, when he might have gratified his sanguinary instincts and diabolical propensities more extensively than he found opportunities of when king. Queen Mary's career must have been contemplated by him with the most exquisite satisfaction; and he no doubt deplored the misfortune of missing such dreadful spectacles as the burnings in Smithfield. The occasional massacre of some thousands of his subjects and the stringing up of a dozen petty thieves every Thursday morning in the Old Bailey, were the only *delights*⁶⁵ he was enabled to allow himself. How immense therefore, must have been his envy, as he retrospected over the reigns of Charles I and Queen Mary!

These observations shadow forth some idea of those *wonderful*⁶⁶ and agreeable times when the "wisdom of our ancestors" ruled the country and established or constructed our institutions. But what eulogist of those times would dare clench his praises by expressing a desire for their return? Yet if they were really such good times, and characterised by so much memorable *wisdom*,⁶⁷ why not desire to restore them? Because, if anyone be knave or fool enough to proclaim that the boa constrictor was endowed with all imaginable docility, ingenuity, and harmlessness, if any body offered to *insert*

⁶⁵ Word obscured by binding.

⁶⁶ Word obscured by binding.

⁶⁷ Word obscured by binding.

*himself*⁶⁸ into the cage of such a reptile, *he would be*⁶⁹ aghast with immitigable horror. In the same way should the panegyrist of the wisdom of our ancestors recoil from the bare thought of applying [...] ⁷⁰ adapting the measure of that wisdom to the circumstances of the present age. The praise bestowed on such wisdom is therefore a lie – and the individual who proclaims this praise is either a wilful or pitiably *deluded*⁷¹ liar.

Such persons are amazingly fond of eulogizing the wisdom of our progenitors. But do they follow the example of their own ancestors in the ecclesiastical sphere? In former times Archbishops and Bishops went out to fight at the head of their diocesan contingents. Thus was it that at the battle of Durham, or Neville's Cross, where Edward III defeated the Scotch patriots, the divisions of his army were led by the Archbishops of Canterbury and York, and the Bishops of Lincoln and Durham. I do not find in recent history that any of our Right Reverend Fathers in God commanded divisions at the battle of Waterloo: they prefer remaining comfortably at home, to wage the war of the Church Militant from the pulpit, in pastoral addresses, or in sulphurous fulminations from public platforms. If they now succeeded in getting up a crusade against the Catholics – a consummation which most heartily desire – they would leave the task of fighting to the fanatics whom they succeeded in maddening, while they themselves stayed quietly within the walls of their sumptuous palaces. Our Archbishops

⁶⁸ Words obscured by binding.

⁶⁹ Several words here are obscured by the binding and poor quality of the scans in general.

⁷⁰ Several words here are obscured by the binding and poor quality of the scans in general.

⁷¹ Word obscured by binding.

and Bishops adore antiquity – all but the bellicose portion of it: they revere the conduct of their ancestors – all but the fighting part of it.

The times of savage and blood-thirsty progenitors were in reality a long-continued reign of terror. Those who are ignorant, insane, or wicked enough to admire the wisdom of their forefathers, are practically calling out for the return of that system by which freedom was crushed under the heel of fanaticism and tyranny. To give our ancestors credit for wisdom is to proclaim ourselves maniacs and slaves. All the evils of which we complain are the plagues which those ancestral Pharaohs have entailed upon us. Their traditionary blessings have proved veritable curses to us. They have encumbered us with the most absurd, preposterous, and atrocious mountain of laws that ever facilitated the cause of tyranny and rendered cheap justice impossible. They have given us an hereditary Aristocracy which exists as a colossal monument of the despotism of the few over the many. They have entailed on us a system which makes one rich man in opposition to ten thousand starving paupers. They have saddled us with debts which are crushing our industry, paralysing our energies, and rendering taxation so intolerable that for thirty years past the country has been bordering upon revolution. In fact, the abuses, the inconsistencies, the wrongs, and the tyrannies which characterise our system, and which have descended to us as an heir – loom from our forefathers, are so flagrant in their nature and so colossal in their magnitude, that they would appal any honest Minister who seriously endeavoured to grapple with them. Let us, then, learn to curse instead of praising the loathsome memory of our ancestors.

The English System of Trial by Jury

Original citation: G.W.M. Reynolds, 'The English System of Trial by Jury', *Reynolds's Weekly Newspaper*, 8 December 1850, p. 1.

The English are accustomed to boast of their system of Trial by Jury, and to bless King Alfred for having devised it. But I can assure my readers that the mode of trial by jury as instituted by that excellent monarch, was very different from the practice which prevails at the present day. He established a most admirable use, which subsequent governments have converted into a monstrous abuse. King Alfred laid it down as a fundamental principle that "every man should be tried by his equals:" but the working man in these times is tried by the classes above him, although Aristocrats are not tried by the classes beneath them. I maintain that no working man, let his offence be what it may, ever has a fair trial; because he is never tried by his equals. No working men ever sit in the jury box: juries are composed only of householders, and generally of those who are in the best circumstances. A labourer who is condemned to death for murder, is himself murdered by the law. Although precisely the same evidence would be given before a jury of labourers, and yet the verdict with its result would be exactly the same, - yet the culprit, if tried by a jury of shopkeepers, does not receive a fair trial, and his execution is therefore a legal murder. But the infamy of the system is more palpably glaring in cases of political trials. If the individual who is accused of sedition be a working man, it is perfectly atrocious to try him with a jury of merchants and shopkeepers. *He* is crushed and enslaved by the very system that makes *them*

prosperous and happy: *he* is therefore interested in changing that system which *they* are equally interested in maintaining;— and therefore from the moment they enter the jury-box they are prejudiced against him. How can he possibly received a fair trial at such hands? King Alfred meant that the working man should be tried by working men—a shopkeeper by shopkeepers—and an Aristocrat by aristocrats. The Aristocrats and the shopkeepers take very good care to be tried by their equals: but the working man is tried by his superiors.

Not only, then, is the present system bad and quite different from King Alfred's original intentions; but it is also rendered much worse by the conduct of juries of themselves. The people ought to hold up to public execution those persons who, in their character of jurymen, so often prostitute an institution through prejudice, selfishness, or pusillanimity. If the jury-box be really the palladium of our rights and liberties, there is no man more loathsomely abhorrent than he who, while sworn to administer justice honourably, conscientiously, and truly, sacrifices an individual to either the Government prosecutor or the prejudice of the upper and middle classes. So long as this system lasts, a Government can always accomplish by means of juries, what it would not dare do in a direct manner, - in the same way as it is enabled to consummate, by the succour of a corrupt and servile Parliament, those wrongs and robberies which it would not even venture to dream of if it were a despotic and solely responsible power.

What will posterity think of the proceedings of an English Tribunal (for I will not call it a *Court of Justice*), as those proceedings are conducted in the present age? A person who in 1898, shall look back fifty years and peruse the records of a trial in 1848, will find a working man tried before a middle

class jury – a partisan Attorney-General prosecuting, and a partisan Judge presiding – and a hireling giving the main evidence in the witness box! The person who half a century hence shall thus revert to our proceedings of the present day, will scarcely believe that such a monstrous spectacle could have been presented to the world in an age calling itself enlightened, and in a country boasting itself free.

The black catalogue of verdicts delivered from the jury-box, in cases of political and religious trials, should make all right-minded persons blush that they bear the name of Englishmen. The jury-box has been scandalised and the institution itself desecrated by the most flagrant examples of ignorance, folly, meanness, perjury, and want of moral courage. The jury take the cue as well as the law from the Judge, and find accordingly: they know no other inspiration than that which animates the bench and the prosecuting portion of the bar. With a very few memorable exceptions, juries have carefully followed the direction of Judges and sided with Attorneys-General whenever the Government wanted to crush an obnoxious person. But in nearly all cases the presiding functionary on the bench is virtually both Judge and Jury: the twelve men in the box truckle most disgustingly to the wigged and robed individual on the judgement seat. The Judge is the interpreter of the law; and yet the Judges are constantly differing amongst themselves as to what the law really means. Hundreds of books are written to explain this law – and each writer takes a different view of it. Then precedents are quoted; and thus the law itself is shown to be in a very miserable state of obscurity. But juries never seem to think there is such an ingredient as *common sense* in the administration of justice; and they decide solely according to the Judge's view of the law. Gross injustice must

hence arise: and the juries are the cause thereof. Let us suppose that a case is tried in the Court of Queen's Bench, and precisely a similar case in the Court of Exchequer; and let us also suppose that its merits *appear* to turn upon a point of law. Then the Chief Justice of the Queen's Bench interprets this law in one way, and the Chief Baron of the Exchequer views it in totally an opposite light: the jury in each case follows the opinion of the Judge; and as they cannot both be right, it is clear that one litigant party has been most unjustly dealt with. This catastrophe would be saved if the juries were only possessed of moral courage enough to scatter the chicaneries of the law to the winds and decide only on the principles of common sense and common justice.

It is not long ago that a Judge said upon the bench, "The plaintiff in this case has clearly justice on his side: but the law is against him. Gentlemen of the jury, you must find according to the law." And these precious *gentlemen* of the jury found accordingly! Yet they had been sworn to try the cause "well and truly:" whereas they tried it badly and untruly, sacrificing the plaintiff to a rascally law against which their verdict should have been an indignant and manly protest. Again, how often are new trials moved for on the ground of mis-direction on the part of the Judge, - plainly showing that juries follow the Judge's direction and leave sense and justice out of the question. The mere fact of the appeal from a Judge at *nisi prius* to the Judges *in banco*, is a proof that Judges are the real arbiters in every case that comes before them, and that the juries are only shadows—mockeries—non-entities.

If any one of my readers doubt that such is the fact, let him pass a day in the Courts at Westminster or at the Old Bailey. He will find that the Judge's "summing up" is nothing

more nor less than a direct indication of the verdict that is to be returned. Some Judges pointedly tell the juries what they are to do; and there are certain cases in which they say outright, "Gentlemen of the jury, your verdict must be for the defendant," or for the plaintiff, according to circumstances. This dictatorial habit is gaining upon our Judges, while juries are becoming proportionately more and more pliant and ductile. The independence of the jury-box has well nigh disappeared altogether: it is abandoned to the bench; - and the Judge, while exercising his own functions, usurps those of the jury. In fact, Trial by Jury has all but ceased to exist in the country; and for any amount of good that a litigant or an accused person derives from the presence of twelve phantoms in a jury-box, he may just as well be without them altogether.

This servile, truckling, mean-spirited conduct on the part of juries gives an enormous and most dangerous power to the Judges. In fact, a person has only to sit five minutes in an English tribunal to be convinced that the Judge is omnipotent over common sense and common justice, if he chooses to exercise his influence. Barristers—especially the junior ones—are disgustingly sycophantic and cringing to the Judges, and seem afraid to say that their souls are their own. This grovelling spirit in the jury-box and at the bar inevitably tends to swell the importance and increase the pomposity of the Judge; and his demeanour often assumes an arrogance and overbearing insolence which are most prejudicial to the march of justice. We have plenty of instances even within the last two years of Judges positively enacting the part of bullies upon the bench,—brow-beating the barristers and insulting the witnesses. Thus, during the political trials of 1848, a presiding Judge behaved insufferably to Mr. Humphreys Parry, who

being a struggling barrister of little or no standing at the bar, and altogether unknown to fame, dared not resent the treatment which he thus received. At the trial of Pate, for alarming the Queen with a switch, Baron Alderson behaved in a most rude, despotic, and coarse manner to Dr. Monro. This eminent physician, in reply to a question put by Mr. Cockburn, Pate's counsel, said, "From all I have heard and from my own personal observation, I am satisfied the prisoner is of unsound mind." Now this was an answer properly given to a question as properly put. But Baron Alderson exclaimed with much coarse roughness, "Be so good, Dr. Monro, as not to take upon yourself the functions of the judge and the jury. If you can give us the results of your scientific knowledge upon the point we shall be glad to hear you; but while I am sitting upon the bench I will not permit any medical witness to usurp the functions both of the judge and the jury." And then, although it was clear as daylight that Pate was as mad as a March hare, the servile jury found a verdict of Guilty,—so that this unhappy man, who ought to be in Bedlam, is condemned to transportation!

The most recent case of judicial partisanship and jury-box prejudice, is that of "*O'CONNOR versus BRADSHAW*." In this instance the proprietor of a Nottingham paper published a ferocious, malignant, and spiteful attack upon the character of Mr. O'Connor, who brought an action against him. Chief Baron Pollock presided, and summed up in a manner so pointedly hostile to Mr. O'Connor that a friend of mine who was in Court at the time, afterwards observed to me, "The Judge evidently has a deep personal spite against O'Connor." Under the direction of this Judge, the jury return a verdict establishing Mr. O'Connor's honesty, but justifying the libel. Mr. O'Connor moves for a new trial: the case is re-argued, and

the Judges *in banco* refuse to disturb the original verdict. I emphatically declare that every idea of common sense and common justice is out – raged by this scandalous proceeding; and every Englishman should blush at this gross perversion of the judicial functions and the attributes of the jury. Again, therefore, do I say that *Trial by Jury* exists no longer in the country; but that henceforth we must substitute the phrase of *Trial by the Judge*.

The Form of Prayer for Charles the First

Original citation: G.W.M. Reynolds, 'The Form of Prayer for Charles the First,' *Reynolds's Weekly Newspaper*, 15 December 1850, p. 1.

At a moment when the dignitaries and subordinates of the Established Church are rabidly bent upon a holy war against the Catholics, and when it is positively asserted that the Law Officers of the Crown are preparing a measure to be submitted to Parliament in order to coerce and punish Catholicism in Great Britain, it may not be amiss to show how much the Protestant Prayer Book stands in need of amendment and purification. There are many forms of prayer and passages in that book which are liable of great objection; but none more so than the section headed "King Charles the Martyr." The prefatory remarks explain the Thirtieth of January as "the day of the Martyrdom of the Blessed King Charles the First;" and state that the object of the prayers set forth "to implore the mercy of God, that neither the Guilt of most sacred and innocent blood, nor those other sins, by which God was provoked to deliver up both us and our King into the hands of cruel and unreasonable men, may at any time hereafter be visited upon us or our posterity." The Hymn which opens the Form of Prayer is composed of selections from the Psalms and other portions of Scripture; and these gleanings have been carefully made with a view to their application to the spirit and purport of the form of Prayer itself. The prayers themselves are filled with such sentences as these:—"Lay not the guilt of this innocent blood to the charge of the people of this land We magnify thy name for thine abundant grace bestowed upon our

martyred Sovereign ... Grant that this land may be freed from the vengeance of his righteous bloodThou didst suffer thine anointed blessed King Charles the First to fall into the hands of violent and blood-thirsty men, and barbarously to be murdered by them Who, by that barbarous murder committed upon the sacred person of the Anointed, hast taught us that neither the greatest of kings nor the best of men are more secure from violence than from natural death.”

Of this nature are the prayers enjoined to be said upon the 31st of January, accompanied with Fasting, which is universally regarded as a purely Roman Catholic custom. It will be seen that in the extracts which I have quoted, the entire nation is presumed to take upon itself the responsibility of the alleged martyrdom and barbarous murder of Charles the First; that he is represented as a good, and sinless monarch; that the people rebelled against him without a cause; that he was endowed with the special grace of God; that those who put him to death were cruel and bloodthirsty men; and that he is now dwelling amongst the saints in heaven. It must also be observed that the “divine right of Kings” is observed throughout those extracts, as indeed it is throughout the whole Form of Prayer, by the incessant representation of King Charles as being the Lord’s “anointed.” I will now proceed to examine to what extent these tremendous averments and startling declarations are borne and justified by historical facts.

Hume,⁷² the historian who was shamefully and servilely devoted⁷³ to the unholy task of patching up the character of the Stuart, admits that “passive obedience was recommended in its

⁷² Word obscured by binding.

⁷³ Word obscured by binding.

fullest extent, the whole authority of the race being represented as belonging to the King alone, and all limitations of Law and Constitution were rejected as seditious and impious.” Charles therefore set the Constitution at defiance; and this was nothing more nor less than treason against his people. Now, if individuals may be put to death for treason against the monarch, surely the monarch must be put to death for treason against the men. Thousands and tens of thousands of patriots have been beheaded, burnt, racked to death, or hung, drawn, and quartered, for high treason; and they are not nominated Martyrs, nor are there any Forms of Prayer drawn up for them. But when a miscreant King is piteously put to death for treason and rebellion against his people, and actually making war upon them and their Parliament, he is forthwith proclaimed a Martyr, and prayers are enjoined to be said in honour of his memory. If anything were required to show the baseness of the dignitaries of the Established Church, it would be the fact that such a Form of Prayer was ever allowed to creep into the Prayer-Book, and that it is still permitted to remain there.

Now let me dive a little more deeply into the character of this Martyr-King. Setting aside all law, constitutional customs, and parliaments, Charles raised money by provocation, imposed taxes by edict, and levied them by intimidation and terrorism. He ordered sycophant bishops and hireling clergymen to preach his jurisdiction, prove his absolutism, and inculcate the doctrine of his right and irresponsible prerogative; and the pulpit was accordingly prostituted to the support of his infamous proceedings. The twelve Judges decided that his laws were illegal and unconstitutional, precisely as the Judges have done with regard to their Elector at the present day, and for which verdict they have even received the approval of the

Times – a journal that is usually subjected to all kinds of tyranny, wrong, and bloodthirsty passion. But, despite the decision of the twelve Judges, Charles continued to enforce his edicts. He punished by death, confiscation, torture, imprisonment, and ruin, all those who refused to pay the taxes which his laws imposed. He even went to such extremes as to *regulate*,⁷⁴ by orders in council, the exports and imports, of large manufactures, and the individual trades. What would our merchants, our Cobdens and Brights, and our middle-class shopkeepers, say to such conduct at the present day? They would be the first, to fly to arms in defence of their commerce, their fortunes, and their profits; and they would put ten thousand Kings to death rather than submit to such edicts. But Charles hesitated in nothing. He fixed the prices of coals, bread, meat, and all types of food;—and the result was that this detestable miscreant produced scarcity and famine in the country. He inflicted ruinous fines upon every tradesman who *departed*⁷⁵ from his tariff of prices. No one could open a shop or embark on a trade without the royal license, for which heavy fees were exacted. He endowed the Star Chamber with plenary powers to inflict torture and on one occasion a hundred and sixty-seven traders were horribly racked and otherwise mutilated for infringing his sumptuary edicts. Women as well as men were tortured, whipped in a state of utter nudity, and exposed in the pillory. Several females were thus punished for merely building houses, with their own money upon their own land, but without having paid the fees for the royal license. At last the King issued a proclamation commanding *all* persons to

⁷⁴ Word obscured by binding.

⁷⁵ Word obscured by binding.

lend him money. He drew up lists containing the names of persons who were thus to be unscrupulously mulcted; and he described in schedules the amount that each was to furnish. When these exactions were not complied with on the first application, he caused his soldiers – a set of brutal savages – to be billeted upon the defaulters, with *full licenses to perpetrate robbery and rape, for which they were to be held exonerated by the law!* If these means failed, all kinds of coercive atrocities were had recourse to. The property of some was confiscated outright, and they themselves were banished to the plantations where they were sold as slaves: others were exposed naked in the pillory, without distinction as to sex—and hired miscreants were set to pelt them with rotten eggs, stones, dead cats, and offal. Many perished under this horrible infliction; and hundreds of females committed suicide to avoid it. Not a few had their ears and noses cut off, and nailed to the posts of the pillory, while the hired miscreants rubbed pepper and mustard upon the mutilated parts! The country was inundated with spies and informers, who received rewards for betraying “seditious, impious, and evil-disposed persons” into the hands of *justice*. Private vengeance, extortion, plunder, and all kinds of horrors were thus encouraged throughout the length and breadth of the land. Forged correspondence, containing treasonable matter, was placed secretly in persons’ houses; and the victims of this diabolical treachery were sent off to the Channel Islands, where they were imprisoned in loathsome dungeons. Hume, the historian, acknowledges that “a commission was openly granted to compound with the Catholics and agree for dispensing with the penal laws enacted against them.” The Court Favourite, Buckingham, aided and abetted his infamous

master in all these horrors and outrages, until the dagger of the glorious Felton put an end to the monster – duke’s career.

But I need not chronicle any more of the countless atrocities perpetrated by Charles the First. All that I have recorded are historical facts, and cannot be refuted. I will now therefore ask my readers whether the people were not justified in taking up arms against this bloody-minded spawn of Satan, and whether they had not a right to put such an incarnate demon to death? I will moreover inquire whether such a sanguinary tyrant, wholesale robber, and cowardly villain has any right or title to the distinction of a Martyr: whether it is possible to believe that he could have been animated with heaven’s “abundant grace;” whether we can suppose that he is now a saint in heaven; and whether his most righteous execution can be properly denominated a cruel and barbarous murder? Lastly, I will inquire whether a remorseless fiend is worthy a special Form of Prayer; or whether the Prayer Book is not desecrated by the maintenance of any such church – service in its pages.

The Legislative Assemblies

Original citation: G.W.M. Reynolds, 'The Legislative Assemblies', *Reynolds's Weekly Newspaper*, 22 December 1850, p. 1.

The *Gazette* pompously announces that Parliament will meet on the 4th February for the despatch of business. Towards the end of January we shall have all the newspapers duly recording the various rumours, pieces of intelligence, and official announcements which invariably herald the opening of a session. Whether the Queen will or will not attend in person,—what points will be conspicuous in the Royal Speech,—how the Lord Chamberlain kindly keeps reserved seats for Peeresses,—who will move and who will second the Address in each House,—and who will bring forward and support the Amendments, if any be contemplated at all,—these and other highly interesting and important details will be duly chronicled. Then, on the arrival of the momentous occasion, the daily press will exert its utmost to invest the ceremonies with all possible solemnity, and if the Queen should open the Legislature in person, there will be the usual quantum of maudlin and nauseating trash. We shall be told how her Majesty went in state, accompanied by his Royal Highness Field-Marshal Prince Albert, K.G., G.C.B., &c, &c., &c., — how her Majesty and her Illustrious Consort looked admirably and were graciously pleased to how most condescendingly to the crowds that cheered them, - how her Majesty was dressed in such and such a style of elegance, and how Prince Albert wore the uniform of a Field-Marshal, - how the canon saluted the royal progress, - how the royal personages were received at the

entrance of the House of Lords, - how her Majesty put on the royal robes, - how somebody carried the sword of state, and somebody else the cap of maintenance, - how the Lord High Chancellor handed her Majesty the Speech, - how her Majesty was pleased to read this most gracious Speech, which she did in a clear firm voice as usual, accentuating the passage which related to popery, and also that which thanked Almighty God for the prosperity of the country and the happiness of the working classes, - how her Majesty, with Prince Albert, retired – and how they went back to the Palace with the same state that marked their arrival. Then, in both Houses, the Ministers will move that an humble Address be presented in reply to her Majesty's most gracious Speech: and the session of Parliament will fairly commence.

But what must we think of all this parade, pomp, fulsomeness, sycophancy, and mummery, when we fall back upon the stern and stubborn truth that there is really no Parliament at all in the country? The whole is a mere delusion – a mockery – and a snare. An idle pageant is dressed up to endow with solemnity the veriest ghost and flimsiest shadow that ever dubbed itself a Parliament. The *Gazette* denominates the Assembly a Parliament: but common sense proclaims it a mere phantasmagorian show.

A Parliament is a meeting of the representatives of the people. This means *all* the people – not *some* of the people. But the shadow at Westminster is the mere assemblage of certain personages representing the interests of a very small section of the people. It is not therefore a Parliament. The term is a misnomer in that sense. The masses have nothing to do with the individuals meeting at Westminster: there is no sympathy between them, because the masses have no share in

the election of those persons – and those persons care not a fig for the masses.

Thus is it that we are constantly hearing of the meeting of Parliament – the adjournment of Parliament – the prorogation of Parliament – the dissolution of Parliament – and the election of a new Parliament: but when the millions come seriously to meditate upon the matter, they discover that there is nothing of the kind in existence. So far as they are concerned, the laws might just as well be promulgated by ukase, and the taxes levied by force, as they are in Russia. The sole and great advantage in a representative system, is that the laws can *not* be made and the taxes can *not* be levied without the general consent, expressed through the medium of the delegates chosen by the whole body of the people. When, therefore, the whole body of the people are not consulted at all in these matters, it becomes an object of little moment to them whether the laws be made and the taxes levied by the will of a few individuals or by the decree of one individual. It is sufficient for them to know that they have not the slightest voice in framing these laws which they are nevertheless bound to obey, nor in levying those taxes which they are compelled to pay. Consequently, a Russian absolutism would not be a whit more enslaving, degrading, and oppressive with regard to the masses, than the present oligarchical system of government is felt and known to be.

The house of Lords of course only represents a few aristocratic families, and who are the natural enemies of popular rights, and whose privileges exist only by the denial of those rights. Consequently, the upper branch of the Legislature is placed, by self-interest, in open antagonism against the wants, demands, rights, and prosperity of the masses. As for

the House of Commons, it is a mere reflection of the House of Lords – with this addition, that it also represents the moneyocracy as well as the aristocracy: but as for the masses of the people, it no more represents *them* than it represents the Chinese or Cherokee Indians. According to the Registration of 1849 – 1850, there are 1,050,187 voters. Of these, 471,502 are for the cities and boroughs; and 578,685 for the counties. Now the counties are the strongholds of Aristocracy and Landlordism: and thus Aristocracy and Landlordism possess more than half the whole franchise at the first glance. But not content with this enormous monopoly, Aristocracy and Landlordism dominate the franchise of half the cities and boroughs; and if we give the remaining half to the Moneyocracy and Millocracy, the sum total of the elective franchise will be accounted for. The three or four democratic Members of Parliament – such as Mr. O'Connor, Mr Dunscombe, Mr. George Thompson, and Mr. Williams – are the exceptions proving the rule: and, with all their talents, zeal, and good intentions, they are mere grains in the overwhelming mass.

It is quite clear, then that the House of Commons is a mere representative of the birth-aristocracy and the money-aristocracy. The democracy of the land has no representation there. Positively and actually the old French Chamber of Deputies, though chosen by only 250,000 voters out of a population of 34 millions, had more of the popular element in its composition than the present House of Commons, chosen by 1,000,000 of voters out of a population of 26 millions. The old French Chamber, vile and corrupt though it were, sternly refused the large dotations demanded by Louis Phillipe for his family: the English House of Commons never murmurs any

demand, no matter how extravagant, made upon it on behalf of Royalty. The French Chamber indignantly refused the King's sons a donation: the English House of Commons readily bestows 12,000*l.* a-year upon the Queen's *cousin*. The French Chamber of Deputies would not hear of a grant for grown-up Princes: the English House of Commons cringingly votes thousands for the stables of a Prince only entering his ninth year. The French Chamber of Deputies had its Republican party: in the English House of Commons no one even dares avow himself a Republican. The French Chamber of Deputies represented only one aristocracy – that of money: the English House of Commons represents two aristocracies – that of birth and that of money. The French Chamber of Deputies, though shackled by multitudinous forms, possessed a Minority that dared insist upon reform: the English House of Commons, with infinitely greater opportunities for effectual parliamentary opposition, possesses a Minority that only makes a sham and trifles with the demand for reform.

In every respect, therefore, the old French Chamber of Deputies was really and truly more democratic than the present English House of Commons. The refusal of the King to reform that Chamber led to a revolution: and yet Ministers in this country as obstinately refuse to reform the House of Commons, which stands so much more in need of such reformation. Surely, then, the Ministers are maintaining a most perilous condition of things? – surely they are neglecting the most solemn warnings? Ordinary prudence, if not a sense of justice, should induce them to cleanse the Augean stable of foul corruption which enjoys the name of the House of Commons.

The oligarchy refuses all concessions. The working classes, then are not the aggressors. On the contrary, they are the

oppressed party; and yet they are denounced as seditious and evil-disposed whenever they demand their rights. They cannot all speak at once; and therefore their accredited champions and advocates speak out for them. This is the only representation that they have. Nevertheless, these representatives of their wants are thrown into prison; and the masses themselves would be dispersed by means of artillery and dragoons, if they did not retire of their own accord. This is the way that millions of human beings, when humbly petitioning for their rights, are treated by the Oligarchy. Henceforth, if a sculptor be in want of a proper subject for a monument of Patience, let him not in future personify the virtue in a statue of a meditative and melancholy female, with classic drapery, - but let his art convert the marble block into the effigy of an English Working Man, clothed in rags.

The assemblies, then, which are to meet at Westminster early in February, are not a Parliament: they are the representation of oligarchical interests, feudal privileges, and the money-power. Even if they be termed a Parliament, it is not the People's Parliament. But will the People never have their own Parliament? - shall their tribunes never enter the doors of that House which ought to be their own? I tell the unrepresented millions that they have only to demand representation - and they will obtain it. But they must demand it loudly, continuously, and unanimously: they must agitate for Universal Suffrage. So long as they remain apathetic, they will remain unrepresented, they will remain serfs, slaves, and bondsmen. Let the demand for Reform, then, resound throughout the land; and let the millions raise one united voice that shall shake the nation with the cry of "Universal Suffrage!"

The Duty of the French Republicans

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The majority of a nation have a right to decide upon every question affecting the general welfare of the community: and the minority are bound to submit to this decision. The mere fact of a majority giving their suffrage for a particular thing, makes the thing itself legitimate and right. France, for instance, contains 34 millions of inhabitants: if a majority of this population, or rather of those whom the principle of universal suffrage designates as eligible to vote, choose to decide in favour of an absolutism worse than even that of Russia, an absolutism at once becomes legitimate and right from France. Again, Russia contains 62 millions of inhabitants: and if, on the principle of universal suffrage, a majority declare in favour of the most ultra-Republican form of Government, then a Republic at once becomes legitimate and right for Russia; and should the Emperor hold out, he must be dethroned and compelled to submit by force.

Every community has a right to choose its own institutions, its own form of government, and its own rulers. The institutions raised up by former generations are not binding upon succeeding generations: but every generation has a right to adopt its own system. If this were not the case. There never would be any reform at all; and therefore if the principle be once admitted that the present generation has the right to amend the institutions raised up by a former generation, it is equally

clear that there is the same inherent right to substitute a new for a worn-out system.

This was the case with France. For centuries it had been cursed with monarchical institutions which made the few happy and prosperous at the expense of the enslaved, wretched, and destitute millions. One morning France awoke from its ignominious stupor – put forth its giant strength – dashed the throne to pieces – and raised up a Republic instead of the effete feudal system of its monarchy. Several experiments have shown that the majority of the French people are in favour of a Republic; and therefore a Republic is the legitimate and proper institution for France. Should any ambitious aspirant or selfish pretender now essay to destroy the Republic and rebuild the throne upon its ruins, insurrection becomes a sacred duty on the part of the French people; and all who either openly or secretly espouse the cause of the aspirant or pretender, are guilty of high treason against the nation, and deserve the extreme penalties which the law may attach to that crime.

The same miserable wretches and grovelling slaves who in England would pray on behalf of “King Charles the Martyr,” would doubtless maintain that M. Louis Napoleon Bonaparte may make himself Emperor if he can, or that Henri o Bordeaux should seize upon the crown if there were an opportunity: and those same bigoted, besotted beings who proclaim these opinions, would no doubt denounce as most criminal any attempt which the Republicans might make at insurrection to thwart the ambitious aims of imperial and royal pretenders. But let it be well understood that an insurrection may be the most sacred of duties or the most criminal of acts: it may either be the most meritorious of human proceedings, or the vilest effort

of turpitude. There are a right and a wrong side to everything: and the insurrection of a people is not an exception to the rule.

Blackstone, who is quoted as an authority by even the most bigoted Bishop or the rankest Tory nobleman, tells us in his *Commentaries* that “the rights and liberties of Englishmen were established in the first place by the Great Charter of Liberties, which was obtained *sword in hand* from King John.” He praises the Magna Charta and the Charta de Foresta with unbounded enthusiasm; and he describes them as “the fruits and rewards of repeated insurrections against the Sovereign.” Blackstone, then – this great authority whom even the rankest Tories quote as glibly as an arithmetician does Cocker, - Blackstone himself glories in the physical force which Englishmen displayed in former times against their rulers. And it is quite clear that insurrection is not only justifiable but also becomes a sacred duty under certain and peculiar circumstances. Thus, no sensible man can honestly regret the rebellion of 1645, which sent Charles I to the scaffold – nor that of 1688, which hurled James II from the throne. The insurrections of the Lollards and the Wickliffites were fully justifiable, as was also that of the Covenanters against Episcopacy in Scotland. No rebellion was ever more pure in its principle nor holier in its cause than that of Wat Tyler: and is there a man so besotted, so vile, so debased, as to declare that Washington’s rebellion and the insurrection of the United States were not the holiest of holy proceedings? The insurrection at the Nore, which sycophant historians endeavour to stigmatize by denominating it *a mutiny*, was one of the most justifiable upon record, and furnishes a far more striking example of moral grandeur in our seamen than even their valour at the Nile or Trafalgar. No passage in our national

annals is more usefully or beautifully interesting than this. The sailors were goaded to desperation, treated worse than brutes, flogged with a fiendish barbarism, robbed and plundered by mercenary speculators and contractors, and trampled upon by the base aristocrats whom interest and high-birth pitchforked into the command of the ships. That insurrection or mutiny, was the only way to compel the rank Tory Government of the day to do justice to the seamen: and as righteous as was their cause, proportionately infamous was the murder of Parker by means of the legal fiction of a court-martial.

Well, then, all these insurrections were holy and meritorious; and no liberal – minded man will controvert the declaration. Equally holy, too, have been the three revolutions in France – the uprising of the Hungarians, Italians, and Germans – and the numerous insurrections of the Poles from time to time against the miscreant Czars of Russia. But on the other hand, there have been insurrections which deserve denunciation as they accepted the House of Hanover; and therefore the Pretender's Rebellion was a crime. The attempt of Georges Cadoudal and the Vendéans to restore the rascally Bourbons in the time of Bonaparte was a flagrant outrage upon the national will of France. The Carlist insurrections in Spain have been most unjustifiable: and, in the same country, the rebellion got up by Louis Phillippe's and Queen Christina's money against Baldomero Espartero, was a flagitious atrocity. The physical force display of Faustin Soulouque, to destroy the republican form of government in Hayti and make himself Emperor, was one of the most criminal of actions.

I have now shown both sides of the question with regard to insurrection – where it is right and where it is wrong. The inference I seek to draw, and which I am anxious to impress

upon the minds of my readers, is that an insurrection will become a matter of duty on the part of the French people in case M. Bonaparte's ambition should lead to more overt measures than his naturally dastard disposition has hitherto allowed him to adopt. The reason I have touched upon this subject, is because the *Times* and other anti-popular journals in England are constantly denouncing the Republicans of France as restless, wilful, unprincipled, and selfish perpetrators of the public peace. But what do these brave men really seek? The establishment of the true principles of Liberty, Fraternity, and Equality. Their very virtue is tortured into an imputation of crime: their patriotism is stigmatised as an anarchical predilection. But the real disturbers of the public peace are not those who seek to establish good institutions- but those who endeavour to re-build up the shattered old ones. Between two such parties there must inevitably be antagonism, and the public peace must be constantly endangered: but it is the duty of the honest journalist and faithful historian to ascertain which party is in the right, and then pronounce a verdict accordingly.

In favour, then, of which party shall the verdict be? — the one that seeks to fall back upon the tyrannies of a vile feudalism — or the other, which endeavours to consecrate the liberties developed by the modern intellect; - the one which reverts its adoring gaze to the past centuries of ignorance, fanaticism, and blood — or the other, which looks with confidence at the capacities of the present in order to realise a brilliant future; - the one which seeks to restore the pomp, parade, and glitter of imperial pageantries and all the inevitable demoralisation of a Court — or the other, which promises the simplicity of governmental forms and the purity of social manners beneath the beneficent influence of a true republic; - the one which

would re-create aristocracies and maintain the breach that long ages of social vitiation have established between the classes – or the other, which proclaims the holy maxim that all men are brethren, and that the Creator gave the earth and its produce as an equal inheritance for the whole human family; - the one, in fine, which seeks to perpetuate the bondage, misery, ignorance, and wretchedness of the masses – or the other, which aims at the establishment of an universal prosperity, the widest dissemination of all the blessings of knowledge, and the expulsion of gaunt pauperism and hideous squalor from the face of the earth.

Now, reader, to which party will you accord your sympathies and your confidence? But I need not ask the honest, the intelligent, and the discerning individual. I must however pause to observe that it is the party of good and true men whom the *Times* and the anti-democratic press so violently denounce: while they extol to the skies the ruffians, miscreants, and scoundrels, who are toiling day and night to check the march of progress. When M. Louis Napoleon Bonaparte made his silly attempt at Boulogne some years ago, there was no epithet of ridicule, hatred, and contempt, which the *Times* omitted to shower upon him: and, on the other hand, throughout a reign of eighteen years, there was no epithet of fulsome approbation, grovelling sycophancy, and servile adulation that this said *Times* forgot to lavish upon Louis Phillippe. But when Louis Phillippe fell, the *Times* suddenly found out that he was a tyrant, a self-sufficient old fool, a political impostor, and a royal counterfeit: and no sooner did Louis Napoleon Bonaparte become President and manifest his base reactionary tendencies, that the *Times* made the grand discovery that he was a very great man, honest, intelligent, endowed with statesman-like

qualities, and admirably adapted to rule over France. Now, after such specimens of time-serving baseness, what confidence can be put in the *Times*? – what sensible person will attach any value to the praise it bestows, or any importance to the abuse which it lavishes? If the opinions of the *Times* be allowed to have any influence at all, then let them be interpreted by the rule of contraries – let those whom it praised be hatred, and those whom it reviles be loved.

Yes – the true friends of peace, happiness, and prosperity for all the world, are *not* the men falsely denominated “the party of order” in Europe, but those whom the base press denounces as anarchists and disturbers. The world would be quiet enough if justice and truth were allowed to follow their natural course: but convulsions will ever be imminent so long as selfish men seek to pervert justice and attempt to stifle truth. This is the policy adopted by Louis Napoleon Bonaparte and his hireling sycophants or expectant supporters: and if his designs to a more determined aspect, then insurrection becomes the solemn and sacred duty on the French people.